GRIMHILD'S VENGEANCE

THREE BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1913

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INTRODUCTION

Borrow and the Kjæmpeviser.

THE modern poetical literature of Denmark opens with a collection of epical and lyrical poems from the Middle Ages, which are loosely connected under the title of *Kjæmpeviser* or Heroic Ballads. Of these the latest scholarship recognises nearly 500, but in the time of Borrow the number did not much exceed 200. These ballads deal with half-historic events, which are so completely masked by fantastic, supernatural and incoherent imagery that their positive relation to history can rarely be discovered. Nevertheless, they throw a very valuable light upon the manners of mediaeval society in Scandinavia, and they are often of high poetical beauty. No conjecture can be formed as to the authors of these ballads, and even the centuries in which they were composed are uncertain. Grimm believed them to be *uralt*, and attributed them to the 5th and 6th centuries. But on linguistic

grounds, this extreme antiquity cannot be maintained. It is now supposed that they were composed at various times between 1300 and 1500, and that in their present form they bear the stamp of the period when they were first collected by the Danish antiquaries of the sixteenth century.

The circumstances in which this famous collection of folk-songs came into public notice were of a romantic nature. Sophia, Queen of Denmark, when sailing across the Sound in the year 1586, was driven by stress of weather to take shelter in the little island-harbour of Hveen, where the famous observatory stood, close by the house of the astronomer, Tycho Brahe. It so happened that at that very time Brahe was entertaining as a guest the most eminent Danish man of letters of that age, Anders Sörensen Vedel (1542–1616). Vedel, whose labours were encyclopædic, was engaged in preserving all the monuments of Danish mediaeval history and learning which he could discover in the monasteries and libraries of Denmark. He had been much encouraged in this work by the Monk of Roeskilde, Peder Olufsen, who on his death-bed, about 1570, had placed in Vedel's hands all the MSS. which he had collected. Queen Sophia,

cloistered in the Ouranienborg with her antiquary and her astronomer, and waiting for the tempest to moderate, desired to be amused with stories of her national history. Vedel ventured to read to her some of the legendary poems which still lingered among the people, and she was so enchanted with them, that she commanded him, when he returned to the mainland, to make a collection of these ballads and publish them.

Accordingly, in 1591, Vedel issued from the private printing-press in his house called Liljeborg at Ribe in Jutland, a selection of 100 mediaeval ballads, under the title of *Et Hundred udvalgte danske Viser*. This volume is one of the landmarks of Scandinavian, and indeed of European, literary history. Vedel made another collection, this time of ancient love-ballads, which he called *Tragica*; it was not published until 1657, long after his death. But the volume of 1591 is the fountain-head of all that has since been written about the Heroic Ballads of the North, and it is impossible to overrate the services of Vedel in preserving what was even then ready to disappear. It seems, moreover, that he was careful of the text, and later scholarship has come more and more to place confidence in his transcripts.

This was, unfortunately, not the case with the next pioneer in the same field, although he deserves great credit also. Peter Petersen Syv (1631–1702) was a very able philologist, who was also a minor poet of ambition. In 1695 he reprinted and edited Vedel's text, adding 100 more *kjæmpeviser* which had been unknown to Vedel. But his work was not so well done; Syv was something of a pedant, and unfortunately either too critical or not critical enough. He ventured to correct the irregularities of the ballads, and not seldom has spoiled them. He bore the proud title of Philologer Royal of Denmark, and he was above all things else a grammarian. But he added to our store of Ballads. No one, during the eighteenth century, advanced on the labours of Vedel and Syv, and their treasuries of beautiful anonymous poetry seem to have attracted no attention in the rest of Europe.

But in the first decade of the nineteenth century, in consequence of what we call the Romantic Revival, poets and scholars in many countries turned simultaneously to the treasure-house of Danish balladry. Jamieson's work, to which I shall presently return, dates from 1806; about the same time Herder translated one or two *kjæmpeviser* in his *Stimmen der Völker*, and in

1809 Wilhelm Carl Grimm started his full translation, under the title of *Altdänische Heldenlieder, Balladen and Märchen*, which appeared in 1811. But it appears that Grimm had heard and perhaps even seen the proofs of a Danish edition of the very highest importance, the *Udvalgte Danske Viser fra Middelalderen*, the first volume of which was brought out by Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek in 1812.* Abrahamson dropped out, but the work was completed by the others, the fifth and last volume appearing in 1814.

Borrow's relation to these texts must now be considered, and it offers some difficulty. In 1826 he published a volume of verse entitled *Romantic Ballads translated from the Danish*, and in the

* The question of priority is rather obscure, but it appears, from a letter written by Grimm in February, 1813, in reply to the critics of his work, that his translation was begun in 1801, when he was not aware of the work undertaken by Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek, but that before his book was published, Nyerup communicated to him some of the results of the investigations of the three Danish editors. Grimm seems to have worked upon an edition of Syv published in Copenhagen in 1787, which accounts for the corrupt state of some of Grimm's text. A good deal of unpleasant controversy was awakened on the subject, but all this has now long slumbered under the dust of a century.

preface he uses these words :—" I expect shortly to lay before the public a complete translation of the KLÆMPÉ VISER, made by me some years ago." It is necessary to bear in mind that there are these two collections of Borrow's translations from the *kjæmpeviser*, the second of which, as we shall see, he did not contrive to publish.

No doubt, he was anxious to emphasise the novelty and rarity of his literary adventures. But his attitude to Jamieson is very strange. As early as 1806 Robert Jamieson (1780–1844) had published a volume of *Popular Ballads*, in which he had translated several of the *kjæmpeviser* and had pointed out their value in relation to the ancient Scottish poems of a similar kind. Sir Walter Scott paid much flattering attention to Jamieson's work, which also attracted a good deal of notice in Denmark and Germany, and inspired the *Drei altschottische Lieder* of G. D. Gräter (1813). It is scarcely possible that Borrow was not aware of all this, yet he never mentions the name of Jamieson, and in 1826 he spoke boldly of himself as breaking into "unknown and untrodden paths." It is not impossible that Sir Walter Scott's patronage of Jamieson had something to do with the ungenerous petulance of Borrow's references to the great novelist in *Lavengro*.

But Borrow's attitude to the contemporary scholars of Denmark is still more surprising. Without saying so in exact words, he gives us to understand that he translated all the *kjæmpe-viser* from the original edition of Vedel. It would be rash to say that Borrow was not acquainted with the *Danske Viser* of 1591, for he does, in one place, quote, whether at first-hand or not, from Vedel's preface. But it requires great faith to accept his own account of his approach to the poems. In *Lavengro*, at a point which Knapp has dated 1820, Borrow tells with brilliant picturesqueness how he purchased, by permitting the wife of an elderly yeoman to kiss his cheek, "a strange and uncouth-looking volume" which had formed part of the kit of same red-haired fishermen who were wrecked on the Norfolk coast:—

> It was not very large, but instead of the usual covering was bound in wood, and was compassed with strong iron clasps. It was a printed book, but the pages were not of paper, but vellum, and the characters were black, and resembled those generally termed Gothic. . . . And now I had in my possession a Danish book, which, from its appearance, might be supposed to have belonged to the very old Danes indeed: but how was I to turn it to any account? I had the book it is true, but I did not understand the language, and how was I to overcome that difficulty? Hardly by poring over the book; yet I did

pore over the book again, but with all my poring I could not understand it; and then I became angry, and I bit my lips till the blood came; and I occasionally tore a handful from my hair and flung it upon the floor, but that did not mend the matter, for still I did not understand the book, which however I began to see was written in rhyme. . . . For the book was a book of ballads, about the deeds of knights and champions, and men of huge stature. . . . collected by one Anders Vedel.

This story of a vellum copy of the rare edition of 1591 thrown up on the shore of Norfolk with a common sailor's effects is told in Borrow's best style. But how far is it true? Whether it is entirely or only partly romance, the inference that Borrow translated the *kjæmpeviser* by the light of nature from this "Gothic" text must be abandoned. He may or may not have handled a copy of Vedel, but he made his translations, as internal evidence amply proves, from the five volumes of Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek, published between 1812 and 1814. This was a cheap and highly accessible edition, and was in the hands of the booksellers complete at least six years before Borrow began to read Danish. He accepted the text of these scholars and their arrangement; he translated their notes word for word,—and gave them out as his own; his volume of 1826 and the privately printed

later ballads are wholly founded upon Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek, and yet, so far as I can discover, he never mentions their names in any part of his writings. He professed that the public should believe his knowledge to be wholly derived from a mysterious black-letter volume washed up on the sands of his native county, and read by him with agonies of labour by the pure light of divination.

In January, 1830, a prospectus was put forth in which "*The Songs of Scandinavia, translated by Dr. Bowring and Mr. Borrow*" was offered to subscribers at the price of a guinea. This was an attempt on the part of Borrow, languidly assented to by Bowring, to give publicity to some 70 *kjæmpeviser* which the former had translated since the publication of his *Romantic Ballads* of 1826. "I am terribly afraid," writes Borrow, "of being forestalled in the Kæmpe Viser by some of those Scotch blackguards," a hit, no doubt, at Jamieson. He was working hard at his translations, and he was further stimulated by meeting in London with the Danish theologian and poetical student, Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, who had done much to popularise the *kjæmpeviser* in his native country. But Bowring proved a broken reed, and Borrow suffered once

again one of those disappointments which so naturally embittered him. It was not until 1874, however, some seven years before his death, that he finally gave up all hope. The MSS. of his translations of the *kjæmpeviser* passed into the hands of Mrs. MacOubrey.

The ballad of *Grimhild's Vengeance* (*Grimhilds Hevn*) is given in three versions by Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek. Borrow has closely followed the editors of 1812 and has translated each of the versions. He added a number of notes, the MS. of which is mutilated, but not so much so as to prevent us from observing that these are translated word for word from the appendix of Abrahamson, Nyerup and Rahbek, but, so far as can be discerned from the fragmentary and mutilated Manuscripts at our disposal, without a sign of acknowledgment.

EDMUND GOSSE.

GRIMHILD'S VENGEANCE

Song the First

It was the proud Dame Grimhild
  Prepares the mead and beer,
And unto her the valiant knights
  She bids from far and near.

She bade them come and not delay
  To tournament and strife;
It was the Hero Hogen
  Who lost his youthful life.

It was the Hero Hogen
  Along the shore went he,
And there he found upon the sand
  The maiden of the sea.

"Now hail, thou maiden of the sea,
  Of wisdom thou art rife;
Say, if I go to Hvenild's land,
  Can I retain my life?"

"Of castles hast thou plenty, knight,
  And store of gold so red,
If thou shouldst go to Hvenild's land
  Thou wilt be smitten dead."

It was the Hero Hogen,
  He straight drew forth his blade,
And he struck off at a single blow
  The head of the ocean-maid.

Then out amid the Sound he cast
  The head all dropping gore;
The body rolled down after it,
  In the deep they joined once more.

It was the Hero Hogen,
  He further wandered on,
Until the Ferry-carl he spied
  The ocean beach upon.

"Now list to me, good Ferry-carl,
  Convey me o'er the Sound,
And I'll give thee my good gold ring,
  It weighs full fifteen pound."

"I will not take thee o'er the Sound
  For all thy gold so red,
If thou dost go to Hvenild's land
  Thou wilt be smitten dead."

It was the Hero Hogen
  His faulchion round did whirl,
And he struck off at a single blow
  The head of the Ferry-carl.

He gave the gold ring off his arm
  Unto the dead man's wife:
"Take that as an atoning gift
  For the Ferryman's young life."

Sir Gunter and Sir Gernot *
  The vessel pushed from shore;
So wrathful was the weather then,
  So wild the waters' roar.

* Squires in attendance upon Hogen.

So furious then the weather was,
  So wild the waters grew,
Asunder soon in Hogen's hand
  The oar of iron flew.

The iron oar asunder flew
  In Hero Hogen's hand,
Then with their broad and gilded shields
  The heroes steered to land.

They 'gan to scour their faulchions
  When they to land had won ;
And there so proud a Damsel stood,
  And their employ looked on.

O she was slender at the waist,
  And just of proper height ;
Swelling was her white bosom,
  And maidenlike her gait.

They went away to Nörborough,
  Where the gate was wont to stand :
" O where is now the porter
  Who here should be at hand ? "

"O here am I the porter,
  To watch and ward I wait;
Did I but know whence ye were come
  I'd bear your message straight."

"O'er many a league of land and sea
  We hither have repaired;
Dame Grimhild is our sister,
  The truth is now declared."

In then went the porter,
  His stand by the board he took;
Quoth he: "Before our portal wait
  Two knights of noble look.

"Two men of birth illustrious
  Now wait before our gate;
The one he bears a fiddle,
  And a gilded helm his mate."

"O he no fiddle bears, I trow,
  For any noble's pay;
And whencesoever they are come
  A prince's sons are they."

It was the proud Dame Grimhild drew
  Her mantle o'er her head :
She hurried to the castle hall,
  And in her brothers bade.

" O will ye go to bower now
  And drink the mead and wine ?
Or will ye sleep in beds of silk
  With two fair maids of mine ? "

It was the proud Dame Grimhild drew
  Her mantle o'er her head,
And into the stone chamber
  To her warriors all she sped.

" Here sit ye all my valiant men
  And drink the mead and wine ;
Now who will Hero Hogen slay,
  Though he be brother mine ?

" Whoe'er will do the doughty deed
  Of striking Hogen dead,
Shall master of my castles be,
  And of my gold so red."

Then answered her a warrior,
  A baron of that land :
" O I will earn the prize this day,
  Forsooth with this good hand.

" O I will do the doughty deed,
  Strike Hero Hogen dead ;
Then I will o'er thy castles rule,
  And o'er thy gold so red."

Then answered Folker Spillemand,
  With mighty iron spear :
" I'll set my mark upon thee, knave,
  Before thou scap'st from here."

And at the first blow he has laid
  Full fifteen warriors low :
" Ha bravely, Folker Spillemand,
  You touch your fiddle bow ! "

He smote to death the warriors,
  A bridge of them he made ;
And broad and long I ween it was,
  Full rough with them he play'd

Above were laid the oxen hides,
  Below the pease so small ;
That trick has vanquished Hogen,
  He fell down first of all.

It was the Hero Hogen
  Would have bounded up with speed :
" No, no, desist, my brother,
  Thou know'st what was agreed.

" No, no, desist, my brother,
  Prove true to what you swore,
If ever you should fall to earth
  You'd never rise up more."

So brave was Hero Hogen
  To his word he true was found ;
Upon his two knees stood he then,
  And got his mortal wound.

But still three warriors slaughtered he,
  They were not of the least,
Towards Hammeren went he then to find
  His father's treasure-chest.

Fortune was yet to him so kind,
  The damsel proud he won;
And she was haughty Hvenild,
  He begot with her a son.

That gallant son, hight Ranke,
  Avenged his father well;
Grimhild entombed by Niflung's gold
  Of hunger-pain did yell.

Then soon from out the land to Bern
  In Lombardy he strayed;
And there 'mongst Danish men he was,
  And prowess high displayed.

His mother she remained at home,
  From her got Hveen its name
'Mongst knights and warriors through the
    world,
  So widely goes its fame.

GRIMHILD'S VENGEANCE

Song the Second

It was the proud Dame Grimhild
  The wine with spices blends;
And unto many a hero free
  She messengers outsends.

"Go bid them come to battle,
  Go bid them come to strife;
I reckon many a hero free
  Shall lose his youthful life."

'Twas Hero Hogen's mother
  She has dreamt a wondrous dream,
That the stately courser tumbled
  As they rode him o'er the stream

" That dream, dear son, a meaning has,
  I rede thee cautious be ;
Beware thee of thy sister,
  She deals in treachery."

It was the Hero Hogen
  He rode along the strand :
The mermaid there he found at play
  Upon the yellow sand.

" Now tell me, pretty mermaid,
  The future thou dost know,
Shall I the prize in Hvenland win,
  And warriors overthrow ? "

" Now listen, Hero Hogen,
  Thou art of kemps the flower,
Enough of land thou dost possess,
  Enough of fame and power.

" And thou both gold and silver hast,
  And castles fair to see,
If thou dost go to Hvenland,
  For thy best it will not be.

"Goods and dominion hast thou, knight,
And store of gold so red,
If thou dost go to Hven this year
Thou wilt be smitten dead."

It was the Hero Hogen, he
Grew wrathful at her speech ;
He strook the wretched mermaid
That she fell dead on the beach.

"There do thou lie and rest thee now,
Thou foul and wicked fay ;
I know well how to guard me
And my enemies to slay."

There rode up to the portal
Of Dame Grimhilda's home,
Two men of noble bearing,
Their steeds were all in foam.

The blow they gave the portal
Rang all the castle through :
"O where art thou the porter,
Why dost thou not undo ?"

Then up and spoke the porter,
  So ready to deceive :
" I dare admit no stranger, Sirs,
  Without my Lady's leave."

He hied him to Dame Grimhild,
  To her he said in haste :
" Two knights before our castle wait,
  Admittance they request."

" O that is Folker Spillemand,"
  Dame Grimhild she did say ;
" And that is Hero Hogen,
  My brothers both are they."

Down went dames and maidens then
  To see the twain alight ;
They all were slender in the waist,
  And just of proper height.

It was the proud Dame Grimhild
  Herself in scarlet clad ;
Then out she hastened to the court,
  The heroes in she bade.

"'Tis custom of our castle none
  A faulchion shall unsheath,
I cannot bear the sight of one
  Since good King Sigfred's death."

"'Twas I that slew King Sigfred
  E'en with my own right hand,
'Twas I that slew King Ottelin
  And him could few withstand.

"'Twas then I lost my acton good,
  And trusty courser grey,
In yonder ice-cold winters
  When besieging Troy we lay."

Then up the hall she led them
  To a hundred of her train;
With naked faulchions brandished, they
  Confront the heroes twain.

"If any knight among ye be
  Who eat here of my bread,
Will dare to slay my brother,
  I will give him gold so red."

When heard that Folker Spillemand
  He would no longer wait ;
His sword from out the sheath he drew,
  Down shivered fell the gate.

When he had bared the mighty blade
  He felt at heart so light ;
He slew full fifteen warriors
  With blows of manly might.

" Ha, Ha," said Folker Spillemand,
  " Right goes my fiddle now "—
And then the Hero Hogen slew
  Full twenty blow by blow.

It was the proud Dame Grimhild
  With wrath well nigh was wode :
" Much better had ye stayed at home
  Than come to our abode.

" Here will a hundred widows be
  'Ere ye this fight have done."
Then answered Hero Hogen :
  " 'Twas by thyself begun."

It was the Hero Hogen,
  His helmet lifted he:
"All under my cuirass of steel
  I burn so furiously.

"I'm weary, weary to the heart,
  And weak in verity;
O would to God in heaven is
  A horn of wine had I."

He lifted up his vizor,
  Of human blood a draught
He took—"*In nomine Domini*"
  The Hero Hogen quaffed.

See, there the knights of Grimhild
  Lie slaughtered every one;
And that has Hero Hogen,
  And valiant Folker done.

"God bless thee, Folker Spillemand,
  Who here a corse dost lie,
Full well and without treachery
  Thy faulchion thou didst ply.

"Full four and twenty fell for one,
  Their death from him they found;
He slew them like a warrior,
  Ere sank he on the ground.

"Ah, brother, by my heart beloved,
  Thy coming cost me dear;
How woeful is my destiny
  That I should lose thee here.

"And if to me is granted
  To live another day,
My sister this shall expiate,
  I her will burn or slay."

The evil fate's o'ertaken her.
  She's paid for all her ill;
King Hogen's son caused Grimhild
  To starve within the hill.

GRIMHILD'S VENGEANCE

Song the Third

O, where will ye find kempions
  So bold and strong of hand,
As Hogen and his brother dear,
  Sir Folker Spillemand ?

Forward stepped she, Bodild,
  Hero Hogen's mother, crying:
" Methought the gallant coursers all
  Were either dead or dying.

" And I possess full wit enow
  That vision to explain ;
If to the Hvenish land ye go
  There'll many a man be slain."

Out rode the valiant brothers where
  The river rolled its tide,
There they the Mermaid found asleep
  Beneath a green hill's side.

"Awake, awake, thou Mermaiden,
  Thou creature wondrous fair;
Say, will my life in danger be
  If I to Hven repair?"

"O turn thee, Hero Hogen, back,
  Thou art a knight so bold,
Thou dost in thy own land possess
  Full many a tower and hold.

"Return, return to thine own land,
  Seek not the warrior joust,
If thou dost to thy sister go
  Thy young life it will cost."

It was the Hero Hogen then
  His sword he straight drew out;
It was the wretched Mermaiden
  From whom the head he smote.

"By thee I now am prophesied,
And dead thou liest there;
I to the land of Hven will go,
Soon as the wind is fair."

Then forward went the heroes two,
They found the ferry-house:
"Arise, arise, good ferryman,
And come here out to us.

"Now listen what I say to thee,
Convey us o'er the Sound,
And I will give thee this gold ring,
It weighs full fifteen pound."

"Thy bright gold ring keep thou thyself,
I it will not possess,
I never to the town should come
But 'twould bring me distress.

"I never should seek the town but I
Should therefore sure be chidden;
I shall not bear thee o'er to-day,
My Lady's me forbidden."

And Hero Hogen grew so wroth,
  So wroth grew he in mood;
The ferryman's head hewed he off,
  So widely reeked the blood.

Then straight the bloody head he cast
  Mid Öresund's swift water;
And, bidding them meet in the deep,
  He cast the body after.

Sir Gunter and Sir Gernot, they
  Their vessel steered from land;
But when they reached the middle Sound
  The tempest was at hand.

O then the oars asunder snapped
  In Folker's hardy hand;
Here Hogen guided with his shield
  The ship with toil to land.

Then cast they out their anchors,
  All on the yellow sand;
It was the Hero Hogen,
  He stepped the first to land.

The others they did not delay,
  But each as he could best
Arrayed himself right manfully,
  And Folker 'bove the rest.

Abroad the warden standing was,
  He on the rampart strode:
"O, there are come our country to,
  Two Athelings so proud.

"O kemps are come our country to,
  And men so bold to see;
They all yclad in iron are,
  Their steeds come springing free.

"The one he bears a hawk in flight,
  Gold on his buckler gleams;
The other bears a fiddle, and
  A prince's son he seems."

Out came she, Dame Grimhild,
  She so fair to speak was able:
"He does not bear a fiddle
  For he serves a noble's table.

"But they two gallant warriors are,
  Two sprouts of Dukely tree;
To know them I have cause enough,
  They brothers are to me."

It was the Count Sir Gunselin,
  His warriors he bespake:
"O, hither Hero Hogen comes,
  A fray with him we'll make.

"O, we will fight with them to-day,
  And we will slay them all;
Then his red gold and forest green
  Shall in our power fall."

Then just within the portal
  Hero Hogen answer made:
"With you I'll blythely hazard that,
  If ye be not afraid."

Out then went the heroes all,
  So sorely fast they hied;
Then unto old as well as young
  Such evil did betide.

In hand of Folker Spillemand
  The sword asunder flew;
He seized a big steel spear, above
  The door that met his view.

And seven such gallant warriors
  He slew at the first blow:
"In Drotten's holy name," he said,
  "My fiddle be known now.

"Now merrily my fiddle goes,
  Ye dance and spring around;
I sweat with strong exertion
  In my acton narrow bound."

It was the Count Sir Gunselin,
  At Grimhild's feet he kneeled:
"O part us from those hardy knights,
  Or help against them yield."

"Fight on, fight on, my good men all,
  On whom I bread bestow;
From fighting ye must not desist
  Till Folker lyeth low."

"Now hear thou, Sister Grimhild,
  I am gored with many a wound;
Thou ne'er to me wert true or good,
  And that I now have found.

"Now I've not closed an eye, an eye
  For days and nights full seven;
I'll avenge my murder certainly
  Ere life from me is riven.

"Gone is my sword so trusty,
  And my good steel spear's in twain;
But all my care I would forget
  Could I a weapon gain."

Then answered him young Hubba Yern,
  He stood by him so near:
"I'll lend to thee the gallant sword,
  My brother loved so dear.

"Methink thou art a hero bold,
  And mighty strong beside;
And that maybe in verity
  On thy fiddle bow espied."

"Ah, thanks to thee, young Hubba Yern!
A true kemp thee I call;
I'll serve thee faithful in return,
So shall my brothers all."

Then hewed he, Folker Spillemand,
'Twas heard up to the sky;
He'd rather perish like a man
Than basely quit and fly.

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

MOLLIE CHARANE

AND OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

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MOLLIE CHARANE *

"O, MOLLIE CHARANE, where got you your gold?"
Lone, lone you have left me here.
"O not in the curragh, deep under the mould."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

"O, Mollie Charane, where got you your stock?"
Lone, lone you have left me here.
"O not in the curragh from under a block."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

* This ballad is founded on a real character—a miser—who by various means acquired a considerable property, and was the first person who ever left "tocher," that is fortune, to daughter in Man. His name was Mollie Charane, which words interpreted are "Praise the Lord." He lived and possessed an estate on the curragh, a tract of boggy ground, formerly a forest, on the northern side of the island, between the mighty mountains of the Snefell range and the sea.

"O, Mollie Charane, where got you your goods?"
Lone, lone you have left me here.
"O not in the curragh from under two sods."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

Two pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
For twenty-six years old Mollie did use.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

His stockings were white, but his sandals, alack!—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
Were not of one colour, one white, t'other black.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

One sandal was white and t'other dark brown—
Lone, lone you have left me here;—
But he'd two of one colour for kirk and for town.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

"O, father, I really can't walk by your side"—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
"If you go to the church in those sandals of hide."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

"O, daughter, my dear, if my brogues give you pain"—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
"There's that in the coffer will make you look fain."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

A million of curses on Mollie Charane—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
The first who gave tocher to daughter in Man.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

THE DANES OF YORE

WELL we know from saga
  And from scaldic lore,
That heroic warriors
  Were the Danes of yore.
That the noble schildings,
  And the men they led,
Oft for Danish honour
  Stoutly fought and bled.

What a time for Athelings,
  What a time for thanes!
What a time for yeomen,
  True devoted Danes!
But I'll say with pleasure
  That, in ancient days,
Death did not annihilate
  All that noble race.

Frederic see, exalted
  On his father's throne,
Sits a splendid monarch,
  Brighter never shone.
Long to him be granted
  That of Grendel's kin
He may check the cruel
  Cursed deeds of sin.

And that long may flourish
  Round about the King,
They who love gold treasures
  All around to fling.
Lords, the first of heroes,
  With their trenchant swords;
Counsellors held in honour,
  For their golden words.

To the Lord of angels
  Praise devout I'll sing,
That from out the grave-hill
  Twas my lot to bring

Golden dishes, goblets,
  Things of mighty worth,
Which for thousand winters
  Lay entombed in earth.

That men in gold smithery
  Cunning, might from them
For the grey haired hero
  Frame a diadem.
Under which his grey locks
  Might all glorious shine,
Whilst the sun, bright flaming,
  Seeks the western brine.

Until, tired of glory,
  Such as meets it here,
Soars the hero's spirit
  To a higher sphere;
Where, with souls united
  Of departed friends,
'Twill experience glory
  Such as never ends.

A SURVEY OF DEATH

My blood is freezing, my senses reel,
So horror stricken at heart I feel ;
Thinking how like a fast stream we range
Nearer and nearer to that dread change,
When the body becomes so stark and cold,
And man doth crumble away to mould.

Boast not, proud maid, for the grave doth gape,
And strangely altered reflects thy shape ;
No dainty charms it doth disclose,
Death will ravish thy beauty's rose ;
And all the rest will leave to thee
When dug thy chilly grave shall be.

O, ye who are tripping the floor so light,
In delicate robes as the lily white,
Think of the fading funeral wreath,
The dying struggle, the sweat of death—
Think on the dismal death array,
When the pallid corse is consigned to clay!

O, ye who in quest of riches roam,
Reflect that ashes ye must become;
And the wealth ye win will brightly shine
When buried are ye and all your line;
For your many chests of much loved gold
You'll nothing obtain but a little mould!

DESIDERABILIA VITÆ *

GIVE me the haunch of a buck to eat,
  And to drink Madeira old;
And a gentle wife to rest with,
  And in my arms to fold.

An Arabic book to study,
  A gipsy pony to ride;
And a house to live in shaded by trees,
  Near to a river's side.

With such good things around me,
  And with good health withal,
Though I should live for a hundred years
  For death I would not call.

* Previously printed, with a slightly different text, and arranged in six lines instead of in three four-line stanzas, in *Lavengro*, 1851, Vol. i, p. 306.

SAINT JACOB

SAINT JACOB he takes our blest Lord by the hand:
"I gladly would Christianize Garsia land."

"O how wilt thou bring it within Christian pale?
No ship hast thou here o'er the salt sea to sail."

"Thy power, O Lord, is so wondrously great,
Full quickly a ship Thou for me canst create."

"Saint Jacob, hie down to the salt ocean strand,
There standeth so little a stone by the land."

Saint Jacob he taketh a book in his hand,
And down he proceeds to the salt ocean strand.

Saint Jacob he made o'er the stone the cross-
mark,
From the land straight it floated, as though
'twere a bark.

It rode o'er the billows so rapid and free,
Right, right towards Garsia promontoree.

So rapid the stone to glide thither began,
A hundred miles space in one short hour it ran.

In comes a foot-boy, to the King doffs his
bonnet :
" Here cometh a stone, and a man sits upon it."

A woman rushed in, in her eyes wonder shone :
" Here cometh a man, and he sits on a stone."

King Garsia taketh his axe in his hand,
And down he proceeds to the salt ocean strand.

" Now hear thou, Saint Jacob, I say unto thee,
What hast thou in this land, in this land here
with me ? "

"Unto thee I am come to this land 'cross the brine,
Because that my Maker is greater than thine."

"O how can thy Maker be greater than mine?
Mine drinks every day the brown mead and the wine."

"O then my Creator is greater than thine,
For mine can the water convert into wine.

"My Maker can turn the black mould into bread,
Can give life back to them who long, long have been dead."

"If thou canst restore me my dearly loved son,
I'll trust in thy Maker, and no other one.

"If I again view him, with flesh and hair dight,
As he fifteen years since disappeared from my sight;

"If I get him again both with hawk and with hound,
Just, just as he sank in the depths of the sound;

'With hair on his head, and with flesh on his bone,
As though he the pang of death never had known."

Then the blessed Saint Jacob upon his book pored:
"'Twill be no easy matter to get him restored."

When he had stood reading a wee little time,
He raised up the man from hell's sorrowful clime.

"Now again thou hast got him with flesh and hair dight,
As he fifteen years since disappeared from thy sight.

"Thou hast got him again, both with hawk and with hound,
Just, just as he sank in the ocean profound.

"With hair on his head, and with flesh on his bone,
As though he the pang of death never had known."

"Now hear thou, my dear son, so fine and so fair,
What news from thy journey afar dost thou bear?"

"The news which I bring from the far distant place,
Is that one little knows of the other's hard case.

"There the woman, who's hated the child of her womb,
Out of the snake-tower can ne'er hope to come.

"There the cruel step-mother, her child who has slain,
Goes begirt with a sword fraught with festering bane.

"The merchants who here in heaps money up-rake,
There hiss in the likeness of serpent and snake.

"The Sysselmen, wretches with hearts hard as stone,
There in the snake-tower despairingly moan."

THE RENEGADE

Now pay ye the heed that is fitting,
  Whilst I sing ye the Iran adventure ;
The pasha on sofa was sitting,
  Midst his harem's glorious centre.

Greek sang, and Tcherkass, for his pleasure,
  And Kergoosian captive is dancing ;
In the eyes of the first heaven's azure,
  In the others black Eblis is glancing.

But the pasha's attention is failing,
  O'er his visage his fair turban stealeth ;
From chebouk he sleep is inhaling,
  Whilst around him sweet vapours he dealeth.

What rumour without is there breeding ?
  Ye fair ranks asunder why wend ye ?
Kyslar Aga, a strange captive leading,
  Cometh forward, and crieth "Efendy."

"Whose face has the power when present
'Mong the stars round the divan which muster?
Who amidst the gems of night's crescent
Has the blaze of Aldeboran's lustre?

"Glance nearer, bright star! I have tiding,
Glad tiding. Behold how in duty
From far Lehistan the wind, gliding,
Has brought this fresh tribute of beauty.

"In the padishaw's garden there bloometh
In proud Istambul no such blossom;
From the wintry regions she cometh,
Whose memory so lives in thy bosom."

Then the gauzes removes he which shade her,
At her beauty all wonder intensely;
One moment the pasha surveyed her,
Then, dropping his chebouk, without sense lay.

His turban has fallen from his forehead,
To assist him the bystanders started.
His mouth foams, his face blackens horrid,—
See, the Renegade's soul has departed!

AN IMPROMPTU

And darest thou thyself compare
  With one who quaffs at Helicon ;
Whose playfellows the Muses are,
  And whom Apollo calleth son ?
Who, had he lived in olden day,
  With some fierce host had strode along ;
Like Taillefer to Hasting's fray,
  Cheering the Normans with his song.

The laurel wreath Apollo gave
  I would not change for kingly crown ;
A King is but an exalted slave,
  Rebellion soon may hurl him down.
But who can force me from the height
  Whereto I've soared on Eagle's wing ?
I leave to Monarchs ceaseless fright
  For what the coming day may bring.

Though poor I be, I've Minstrelsy,
  When fortune frowns I'll strike my lyre ;
Against the world's inclemency
  'Twill warm my soul with heavenly fire.
Then wonder not if proud the air
  Of one who's high Apollo's son ;
Nor henceforth dare thyself compare
  With one who quaffs at Helicon.

A HYMN

O JESUS, Thou Fountain of solace and gladness
Of Heaven's high Three second person divine;
Forgive, O forgive me my blindness and madness,
And guide to Thy kingdom this spirit of mine.

Dearly, O Jesus,
Thou boughtest me,
Yon Friday dark
Upon the tree.

Thy foes were numerous,
Fierce and fell;
Few and weak those
Who wished Thee well.

Nigh stood Thy mother,
  Full of fears,
Wringing her hands
  And bathed in tears.

Often, O Jesus,
  Wilfully
With my great sins
  I've tortured Thee.

Causing Thy wounds
  To open again,
Waking anew
  The ancient pain.

All the kindness
  Thou hast display'd,
With black ingratitude
  I've repaid.

But Jesus, Creator of earth and of ocean,
  Who me, a vile sinner, so dearly didst buy ;
My damnable ignorance turn to devotion,
  And guide my poor soul to Thy courts in the
    sky.

THE TRANSFORMED DAMSEL.*

My father up of the country rode,
  A maiden he would wed;
And a foul witch he married then,
  If the whole truth be said.

The first night they together slept,
  She was a mother kind to me;
But when the second night arrived,
  A cruel stepmother was she.

I was seated at my father's board
  With dogs and whelps amused;
Towards me striding my stepmother came,
  And cruelly me she used.

* This Ballad should be compared with *The Cruel Step-dame*, printed in *The Serpent Knight and Other Ballads*, 1913, pp. 30–33. Also with *The Transformed Damsel*, printed in *The Return of the Dead and Other Ballads*, 1913, pp. 13–14.

She changed me to a little hind,
  Bade me into the forest wend ;
My seven maids then she changed to wolves,
  And ordered them my flesh to rend.

But my seven maids would rend me not,
  So dearly me they loved ;
Then vexèd sore my step-dame was,
  That no worse my fortune proved.

Sir Orm he serves in the King's palace,
  A Knight is he so fair ;
He sighs for the maiden day and night,
  But in secret he keeps his care.

Sir Orm he rode from the King's palace,
  He could enjoy no peace ;
He rode into the good green wood,
  The hart and hind to chase.

Sir Orm set his bow his knee before,
  He rode to the hind so near ;
But the hind would not from the sleuth-hounds
    flee,
  For the Knight to her was dear.

But the hounds advanced to the hind so near,
  That the hind was forced to fly;
She changed herself to a little bird,
  And flew high up in the sky.

Anon down flew the little bird,
  Perched a linden bough upon;
Sir Orm he stood there down below,
  And sorely did he moan.

Down flew the lovely little bird,
  And 'gan on the bait to feast,
Which out of his bosom Sir Orm had cut,
  So well it pleased her taste.

And then the lovely little bird
  Dropped down on the yellow sand,
And she became the fairest damsel,
  Was ever seen in the land.

The Damsel stood under the linden bough,
  Freed was she now from thrall;
Sir Orm he stood so near thereby,
  They related their sorrows all.

"Many thanks to thee, Sir Orm the bold
  Thou'st freed me from my woe;
Except beside my snow-white side
  Thou sleep shalt nevermoe."

Thanks be to him, Sir Orm the bold
  He kept his faith so well;
The Monday morn thereafter
  His bridal it befell.

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TORD OF HAFSBOROUGH

It was Tord of Hafsborough,
  O'er the verdant wold would ride,
And there he lost his hammer of gold,
  'Twas lost for so long a tide.

It was Tord of Hafsborough,
  His brother he addressed:
" Thou shalt away to the Norland hills,
  My hammer be thy quest.

It was Lokke Leyemand,
  A feather robe o'er him drew;
And away to the Norland mountains high
  O'er the briny sea he flew.

In the midst of the castle yard
  He smoothèd his array ;
Then straight he took to the castle hall,
  To the carlish Count his way.

" Be welcome, Lokke Leyemand,
  Be welcome my castle to ;
Say ! how fare things in Hafsborough ?
  With the land how does it go ? "

" O, well fare things in Hafsborough,
  And well in the country all ;
Tord has his golden hammer lost,
  Therefore seek I your hall."

" Tord he shall not his hammer get,
  Thou back may'st carry him word ;
Full five-and-ninety fathoms deep
  It lies in the earth interred.

" Tord he shall not his hammer get,
  To thee I vow and swear,
Save he give me Damsel Fridleifsborg,
  With all his goods and gear."

It was Lokke Leyemand,
  O'er himself the feather robe drew ;
And with his answer back amain
  O'er the briny sea he flew.

" Thou never wilt get thy hammer of gold,
  Upon that thou may'st rely,
Unless he have Damsel Fridleifsborg,
  And all our property."

Then answered straight the proud Damsel,
  Upon the bench as she sate :
" Ye'd better give me a Christian man,
  Than the laidly trold for mate.

" But we will take our old father,
  And deck so fine his head,
And we'll carry him to the Northern hills,
  To stand for bride in my stead."

And now to the house of the merry bridegroom
  They the young old bride convey ;
Upon her dress no gold was spared,
  For a verity I say.

And so they took the lovely bride,
  On the bride-bench placed her frame;
And to skink before the bride himself
  The carlish Count he came.

Then she ate six oxen bodies,
  And three fat swine beside;
Loaves seven hundred were her meal,
  Ere for a draught she cried.

Before her thirst she could assuage
  She drank ten casks of ale;
She set the can once more to her mouth
  And to hickuping then she fell.

The carlish Count strode up and down,
  And wrung his hands so sore:
"O whence can this young bride be come?
  She does so much devour!"

The Count he called to his Botelere:
  "Thou hadst better broach away,
For we have here such a wondrous bride,
  She'll drink for ever and aye."

Answered then Lokke Leyemand,
  'Neath his sleeve he laughed with glee:
" For full eight days she has not ate.
  She longed so much for thee."

Outspake the laidly carlish Count,
  And thus the Count did cry:
" O, call ye in my serving swains,
  Bid them come instantly.

" Go, fetch me hither the hammer of gold,
  Glad I'll surrender it;
If I can either in honour or shame,
  Of such a young bride be quit."

The Kempions eight in number were,
  Who the hammer brought on a tree;
They laid it down so courteously
  Across the young bride's knee.

It was then the youthful bride
  Took up the hammer big;
I tell to ye for a verity
  She swung it like a twig.

First she slew the carlish count,
  That throld both laid and tall ;
And then as they strove to 'scape through the
    door,
  She slew the little trolds all.

The guests and the Norland men each one
  So downcast were of mood ;
Blows from the hand of the bride they got
  That robbed their cheeks of blood.

It was Lokke Leyemand,
  He opened his mouth in game :
" Now we will fare to our country home,
  And our sire a widow proclaim."

FROM THE ARABIC

O THOU who fain would'st wisdom gain,
  Live night and day untired ;
For by repeated toil and pain
  It is alone acquired.

THORVALD

Svend Tveskjeg havde sig en Mand

SWAYNE TVESKIEG did a man possess,
Sir Thorvald hight ;
Though fierce in war, kind acts in peace
Were his delight.
From port to port his vessels fast
Sailed wide around,
And made, where'er they anchor cast,
His name renown'd.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

Prisoners he bought—clothes, liberty,
On them bestowed,
And sent men home from slavery
To their abode.

And many an old man got his boy,
His age's stay ;
And many a maid her youth's sole joy,
Her lover gay.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

A brave fight Thorvald loved full dear,
For brave his mood ;
But never did he dip his spear
In feeble blood.
He followed Swayne to many a fray
With war-shield bright,
And his mere presence scar'd away
Foul deeds of might.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

They hoist sail on the lofty mast,
It was King Swayne,
He o'er the bluey billows pass'd
With armed train.

His mind to harry Bretland * boiled ;
He leapt on shore
And every, every thing recoiled
His might before.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

Yet slept not Bretland's chieftain good ;
He speedily
Collected a host in the dark wood
Of cavalry.
And evil through that subtle plan
Befell the Dane ;
They were ta'en prisoners every man,
And last King Swayne.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

" Now hear thou prison-foogd ! † and pray
My message heed ;
Unto the castle take thy way,
Thence Thorvald lead !

* Britain.

† Prison-foogd, the governor of the prison, Dan fogd.

Prison and chains become him not,
Whose gallant hand
So many a handsome lad has brought
From slavery's band."
But Thorvald has freed his King.

The man brought this intelligence
To the bower's door,
But Thorvald, with loud vehemence,
"I'll not go," swore.
"What—go, and leave my sovereign here,
In durance sore?
No! Thorvald then ne'er worthy were
To lift shield more."
But Thorvald has freed his King.

What cannot noble souls effect?
Both freedom gain
Through Thorvald's prayer, and the respect
His deeds obtain.

And from that hour unto his grave,
  Swayne ever show'd
Towards his youth's friend, so true and brave,
  Fit gratitude.
But Thorvald has freed his King.

Swayne Tveskieg sat with kings one tide,
  O'er mead and beer,
The cushion soft he stroaked and cried,
  " Sit, Thorvald, here.
Thy father ne'er rul'd land like me
  And my compeers!
But yarl and nobleman is he
  Whose fame thine nears.
For Thorvald has freed his King."

PETER COLBIORNSEN

'FORE Frederekstеen King Carl he lay
With mighty host ;
But Frederekshal from day to day,
Much trouble cost.
To seize the sword each citizen
His tools let fall,
And valiant Peter Colbiornsen
Was first of all.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

'Gainst Frederekshal so fierce and grim
Turned Carl his might,
The citizens encountered him
In numbers slight,

But ah, they fought like Northern men,
For much loved land,
And it was Peter Colbiornsen
That led the band.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

Such heavy blows the Norsemen deal
Amid the foe,
Like ripe corn 'fore the reaper's steel
The Swedes sink low.
But sturdiest reaper weary will,
So happ'd it here ;
Though many the Norwegians kill,
More, more appear.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen

Before superior force they flew,
As Norsemen fly,
They but retired, the fight anew
Unawed to ply.

Now o'er the bodies of his slain
His way Carl makes;
He thinks he has the city ta'en,
But he mistakes.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

A speedy death his soldiers found
Where'er they came;
For Norse were posted all around,
And greeted them;
Then Carl he sent, but sorely vext,
To Frederekstеen,
And begg'd that he might bury next
His slaughtered men.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

"No time, no time to squander e'er
Have Norsemen bold,
He came self-bidden 'mongst us here,"
Thus Carl was told;

"If we can drive him back agen,
We now must try!"
And it was Peter Colbiornsen
Made that reply.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

Lo! from the town the flames outburst,
High-minded men!
And he who fired his house the first
Was Colbiornsen.
Eager to quench the fire, the foes
Make quick resort,
But bullets fell as fast as snows
Down from the fort.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

Now rose the blazes toward the sky,
Red, terrible,
His heroes' death the King thereby
Could see right well.

Sir Peter's word he then made good,
His host retires;
But in his path the steen it stood,
And on him fires.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

Magnificent 'midst corse and blood
Glowed Frederekshal;
Illum'd its own men's courage proud,
And Swedesmen's fall.
Whoe'er saw pile funereal flame
So bright as then?
Sure never shall expire thy name,
O Colbiornsen!
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

KRAGELILL

'TWAS noised about, 'twas noised about,
  Full far 'twas noised I ween ;
King Sigurd has his daughter lost,
  She stolen from him has been.

It was gallant King Sigurd then
  His bonnet he put on ;
And he away to the high, high hall
  To his courtmen and knights is gone.

They cast the die upon the board,
  The die it rolled around ;
It fell upon Regnfred, the King's son,
  He to seek the maid is bound.

About the world for one winter,
  And for winters five he sought;
But he in all that weary tide
  Could hear of the maiden nought.

It was Regnfred, the King's son,
  Through the green wood rode his way;
And there met him a little stranger lad,
  About the break of day.

"Now do thou hear, thou stranger lad,
  All that I say to thee;
The very next maid that thou know'st of
  Do thou shew unto me."

"And do thou hear, thou fair young swain
  I pray I may not offend,
But the very next maid that I know of
  Sir Tabor's goats doth tend.

"Her kirtle is of kid-skin made,
  Her mantle of wadmal grey,
Her locks, which shine like gleamy gold,
  Adown her shoulders stray."

Then he rode o'er the meadows green,
  And through the brake and thorn,
And there did he the maiden find,
  She drove her goats from the corn.

He took her tenderly in his arm,
  Kissed her on her cheek so fair :
" I entreat thee now by the highest God,
  Thy father to me declare."

" An ancient man my father is,
  Tends goats in the morass ;
Kragelill I myself am called,
  Can I boast of my birth, alas ! "

It was Regnfred, the King's son,
  In haste drew out his knife :
" Thou shalt to me thy father name,
  Or thou shall lose thy life."

" Sigurd the King my father is,
  His Queen my mother dear ;
And I myself am Swanelill,
  Name fitting for me to bear."

Then o'er her threw the mantle blue
  Regnfred, the King's good son ;
He lifted her so courteously
  His courser grey upon.

And he rode o'er the meadows green,
  And over the plains so wide ;
Behind him came running an ancient man,
  And so loud on Kragelill cried.

But the swain gave him both silver and gold,
  Contented away he hied ;
Then he unhindered did carry the maid
  To her father's halls of pride.

Now has Regnfred, the King's son,
  O'ercome his dire distress ;
He sleeps each night so joyously
  In the arms of his princess.

And now is Damsel Swanelill
  To kith and kin restored ;
So joyously she sleeps each night
  With Regnfred her wedded lord.

ALLEGAST

THE Count such a store of gold had got,
His equal for wealth in the land was not.

But the Count he had of a hare the heart,
At the slightest thing he with fear would start.

Yet at last he grew of courage so rife,
That he wooed the King's daughter to be his
wife.

Then answer made Carl, the son of the King:
I ne'er will consent to such shameful thing.

" For he served my father like a knave,
He'll not bear on his helm the stroke of a
glaive.

"Last year the King's coursers he helped to groom,
This year he'll to wed the King's daughter presume."

Nought booted all Carl, the King's son, could say;
'Gainst the wish of her brother they gave her away.

Dreamt Carl, the King's son, on his night-couch laid,
That he would take up the thieving trade.

"May the Lord God grant I the man may find,
Who best can steal of the thieving kind

"God grant that I in with Allegast fall,
Who best can steal of the world's thieves all."

Early at morn the day shone clear,
From the house Carl, the King's son, rode in career.

And when to the castle gate he had won,
There Allegast stood, and leaned thereupon.

"What kind of man, my friend, may you be,
Whom loitering here by the gate I see?"

"The folks, young Sir, me Allegast call,
I am the best thief of the world's thieves all."

"Then we'll to each other a solemn oath give,
To steal and to thieve all the days that we live.

"Now we will away to the house of the Count,
And the courser we'll steal which to ride he is
wont."

And when they arrived on the verdant plain,
Into hot dispute fell the comrades twain.

They disputed which should break the wall,
They disputed which therethrough should crawl.

But Allegast he should break down the wall,
And Allegast he should creep through withall.

"But how shall we bear the Count's saddle
away?
So many bells that saddle array."

The Count to his page that evening said:
" My saddle wipe, ere thou get thee to bed.

" For to-morrow I'm bent to ride to the Ting,
I'll have Carl hanged, the son of the King."

Then the Countess in bitter grief answer made:
" You'll ne'er live so long as to see him dead.

" My father's servant last year thou wast,
Now to sleep with his daughter the honour thou
hast."

The Count at that word so ireful grew,
He smote his wife that the blood out-flew.

At hand was Sir Carl, heard all they spake:
" I soon of this matter an end will make."

Then Carl he entered through the door,
And a naked sword in his hand he bore.

" Thou dog, thou shalt never more have the
might
The gentle daughters of Kings to smite.

"Thou dog, thou shalt never more have the
power
To threaten Kings' children within thy bower."

The Count by his long yellow locks he took,
And by the bed's side his head off strook.

"Do thou lie there, and for ever be banned,
I'll bestow on another my sister's hand.

"I'll give her Sir Allegast, he is a knight
So true and trusty and valiant in fight."

The King's sweet daughter has Allegast wed,
For her infamous husband unwept lies dead.

These gallants were thieves in no other way,
Than that they a trick on the Count would play.

But could all thieving come to so fair an end,
There's many, I trow, would a-thieving wend!

EPIGRAMS

1

ASSUME a friend's face when a foeman you spy,
For his hatred you'll turn into friendship thereby.
Deal gentle words round you when threats are outpoured,
For not against silk do we use the sharp sword.
By means of caresses and promises fair,
The elephant fierce you may guide with a hair.

2

The lion in woods finds prey of noble kind,
In fields of air the hawk sufficient meat;
He who would hunt within a house confined,
Must needs possess the spider's hands and feet.

3

Though God provides our daily bread
Yet all must seek that bread, I ween;
Though all must die, there is no need
To rush the dragon's jaws between.

4

To trust a man I never feel inclined,
Unless I know his very inmost mind ;
Better an open foe your flesh should rend,
Than you should deem a secret foe your friend.

5

A hunter who was always seeking game
In evil hour upon a tiger came ;
Chance to the hunter is not always kind,
Instead of game he may a tiger find.

6

The plans of men of shrewdest wit
  To fail are known,
Whilst beardless lads the mark will hit
  By chance alone.

7

Well was it said, long years ago,
Never trust him whom you've given a blow ;
Trust not the heart you have caused to ache,
For thine, if it can, it will surely break.
Fling not a stone at the wall of a town,
Lest one from the rampart should strike you down.

8

Who roams the world by many wants beset,
Is quickly glad his own name to forget ;
Unless you've gold you cannot do much harm,
And if you've gold you need no other arm.
Gold if you lack you cannot cross the brine ;
Better than ten men's strength is one man's
coin.

ON
A YOUNG MAN WITH RED HAIR

He is a lad of sober mind,
By no means martially inclined ;
Nor fit to bear war's dreadful shocks,
Although he carries fire-locks.

London :
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.

Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

THE GOLD HORNS

TRANSLATED BY

GEORGE BORROW

from the Danish of

ADAM GOTTLOB OEHLENSCHLÄGER

EDITED

with an Introduction by

EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

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INTRODUCTION

Early in the present year Mr. Thos. J. Wise discovered among the miscellaneous MSS. of Borrow a fragment which proved to be part of a version of Oehlenschläger's *Gold Horns.* His attention being drawn to the fact, hitherto unknown, that Borrow had translated this famous poem, he sought for, and presently found, a complete MS. of the poem, and from this copy the present text has been printed. The paper on which it is written is watermarked 1824, and it is probable that the version was composed in 1826. The hand-writing coincides with that of several of the pieces included in the *Romantic Ballads* of that year, and there can be little doubt that Borrow intended *The Gold Horns* for that volume, and rejected it at last. He was conscious, perhaps, that his hand had lacked the

skill needful to reproduce a lyric the melody of which would have taxed the powers of Coleridge or of Shelley. Nevertheless, his attempt seems worthy of preservation.

The Gold Horns marks one of the most important stages in the history of Scandinavian literature. It is the earliest, and the freshest, specimen of the Romantic Revival in its definite form. In this way, it takes in Danish poetry a place analogous to that taken by *The Ancient Mariner* in English poetry.

The story of the events which led to the composition of *The Gold Horns* is told independently, by Steffens and by Oehlenschläger in their respective Memoirs, and the two accounts tally completely. Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger (1779–1850), the greatest poet whom the North of Europe has produced, had already attracted considerable renown and even profit by his writings, which were in the classico-sentimental manner of the late 18th century, when, in the summer of 1802, the young Norwegian philosopher, Henrik Steffens, arrived in Copenhagen from Germany, where he had imbibed the new romantic ideas. He began to give lectures on

æsthetics, and these awakened a turmoil of opposition. Among those who heard him, no one was more scandalised than Oehlenschläger, then in his twenty-third year. He was not acquainted with Steffens, but in the course of the autumn they happened to meet at a restaurant in Copenhagen, when they instantly experienced a violent mutual attraction. Steffens has described how deep an impression was made upon him by the handsome head, flashing eyes, and graceful vivacity of the poet, while Oehlenschläger bears witness to being no less fascinated by the gravity and enthusiasm of the philosopher. The new friends found it impossible to part, and sixteen hours had gone by, and 3 a.m. had struck, before Oehlenschläger could tear himself away from the company of Steffens.

He scarcely slept that night, and rose in a condition of bewilderment and rapture. His first act, after breakfast, was to destroy a whole volume of his own MS. poetry, which was ready for press, and for which a publisher had promised him a handsome sum of money. His next was to sit down and write *The Gold Horns*, a manifesto

of his complete conversion to the principles of romanticism. Later in the day he presented himself again at Steffens' lodgings, bringing the lyric with him, "to prove," as he says, "to Steffens that I was a poet at last beyond all doubt or question." His new friend received him with solemn exultation. "Now you are indeed a poet," he said, and folded him in his arms. The conversion of Oehlenschläger to romanticism meant the conquest of Danish literature by the new order of thought.

Oehlenschläger has explained what it was that suggested to him the leading idea of his poem. Two antique horns of gold, discovered some time before in the bogs of Slesvig, had been recently stolen from the national collection at Rosenborg, and the thieves had melted down the inestimable treasures. Oehlenschläger treats these horns as the reward for genuine antiquarian enthusiasm, shown in a sincere and tender passion for the ancient relics of Scandinavian history. From a generation unworthy to appreciate them, the *Horns* had been withdrawn, to be mysteriously restored at the due romantic hour. He was, when he came under

the influence of Steffens, absolutely ripe for conversion, filled with the results of his Icelandic studies, and with an imagination redolent of *Edda* and the Sagas. To this inflammable material, Henrik Steffens merely laid the torch of his intelligence.

It is impossible to pretend that Borrow has caught the enchanting beauty and delicacy of the Danish poem. But he has made a gallant effort to reproduce the form and language of Oehlenschläger, and we have thought it not without interest to print opposite his version the whole of the original Danish.

EDMUND GOSSE.

GULDHORNENE

De higer og söger
I gamle Böger,
I oplukte Höie,
Med speidende Öie,
Paa Sværd og Skjolde,
I mulne Volde,
Paa Runestene,
Blandt smuldnede Bene.

Oldtids Bedrifter
Anede trylle,
Men i Mulm de sig hylle,
De gamle Skrifter.
Blikket stirrer,
Sig Tanken forvirrer,
I Taage de famle.
" I gamle, gamle,
Forsvundne Dage!
Da det straalte paa Jorden,
Da Östen var i Norden,
Giver Glimt tilbage!"

THE GOLD HORNS

Upon the pages
Of the olden ages,
And in hills where are lying
The dead, they are prying ;
On armour rusty,
In ruins musty,
On Rune-stones jumbled,
With bones long crumbled.

Eld's deeds, through guesses
Beheld, are delighting,
But mist possesses
The ancient writing.
The eye-ball fixed is,
The thought perplexed is ;
In darkness they're groping
Their mouths they're op'ing :
"Ye days long past,
When the North was uplighted,
And with earth heav'n united,
A glimpse back cast."

Skyen suser,
Natten bryser,
Gravhöien sukker,
Rosen sig lukker.
De sig möde, de sig möde,
De forklarede Höie,
Kampfarvede, röde,
Med Stjerneglands i Öie.

" I, som rave iblinde,
Skal finde
Et ældgammelt Minde,
Der skal komme og svinde!
Dets gyldne Sider
Skal Præget bære,
Afældste Tider.

The clouds are bustling,
The night blasts rustling,
Sighs are breaking,
From grave-hills quaking,
The regions were under
Thunder.
Of the mighty and daring,
The ghosts there muster,
Stains of war bearing,
In their eye star lustre.

"Ye who blind are straying,
And praying,
Shall an ag'd relic meet,
Which shall come and shall fleet,
Its red sides golden,
The stamp displaying
Of the times most olden.

Af det kan I lære,
Med andagtsfuld Ære
I vor Gave belönne!
Det skjönneste Skjönne,
En Mö
Skal Helligdommen finde!"

Saa sjunge de og svinde,
Lufttonerne döe.

Hrymfaxe, den sorte,
Puster og dukker
Og i Havet sig begraver;
Morgenens Porte
Delling oplukker,
Og Skinfaxe traver
I straalende Lue
Paa Himmelens Bue.

That shall give ye a notion
To hold in devotion
Our gift, is your duty!
A maiden, of beauty
Most rare.
Shall find the token!"

They vanished; this spoken
Their tones die in air.

Black Hrymfax, weary,
Panteth and bloweth,
And in sea himself burieth;
Delling, cheery,
Morn's gates ope throweth;
Forth Skinfax hurrieth,
On heaven's bridge prancing,
And with lustre glancing.

Og Fuglene synge ;
Dugperler bade
Blomsterblade,
Som Vindene gynge ;
Og med svævende Fjed
En Mö hendandser
Til Marken afsted.
Violer hende krandser,
Hendes Rosenkind brænder,
Hun har Liljehænder ;
Let som et Hind,
Med muntert Sind
Hun svæver og smiler ;
Og som hun iler
Og paa Elskov grubler,
Hun snubler—
Og stirrer og skuer
Gyldne Luer
Og rödmer og bæver
Og skjælvende hæver
Med undrende Aand
Udaf sorten Muld
Med snehvide Haand,
Det röde Guld.

The little birds quaver,
Pearls from night's weeping ;
The flowers are steeping
In the winds which waver ;
To the meadows, fleet
A maiden boundeth ;
Violet fillet neat
Her brows surroundeth ;
Her cheeks are glowing,
Lilly hands she's showing ;
Light as a hind,
With sportive mind
She smiling frisketh.
And as on she whisketh,
And thinks on her lover,
She trips something over ;
And, her eyes declining,
Beholds a shining,
And red'neth and shaketh,
And trembling uptaketh
With wondering sprite
From the dingy mould,
With hand snow-white,
The ruddy gold.

En sagte Torden
Dundrer;
Hele Norden
Undrer.

Og hen de stimle
I store Vrimle;
De grave, de söge
Skatten at foröge.
Men intet Guld!
Deres Haab har bedraget:
De see kun det Muld,
Hvoraf det er taget.

Et Sekel svinder!

Over Klippetinder
Det atter bruser.
Stormens Sluser
Bryde med Vælde
Over Norges Fjelde
Til Danmarks Dale.
I Skyernes Sale
De forklarede Gamle
Sig atter samle.

A gentle thunder
Pealeth ;
The whole North wonder
Feeleth.

Forth rush with gabble
A countless rabble ;
The earth they're upturning,
For the treasure burning.
But there's no gold !
Their hope is mistaken ;
They see but the mould,
From whence it is taken.

An age by rolleth.

Again it howleth
O'er the tops of the mountains.
Of the rain the fountains
Burst with fury ;
The spirits of glory
From Norge's highlands,
To Denmark's islands,
In the halls of ether
Again meet together.

" For de sjeldne Faa,
Som vor Gave forstaae,
Som ei Jordlænker binde
Men hvis Sjæle sig hæve
Til det Eviges Tinde ;
Som ane det Höie
I Naturens Öie ;
Som tilbedende bæve
For Guddommens Straaler
I Sole, Violer,
I det Mindste, det Störste,
Som brændende törste
Efter Livets Liv ;
Som, o store Aand
For de svundne Tider !
Se dit Guddomsblik
Paa Helligdommens Sider :
For *dem* lyder atter vort Bliv.

" Naturens Sön,
Ukjændt i Lön,
Men som sine Fædre
Kraftig og stor,
Dyrkende sin Jord,
Ham vil vi hædre,
Han skal atter finde ! "
Saa syngende de svinde.

" For the few there below
Who our gift's worth know,
Who earth's fetters spurn all,
And whose souls are soaring
To the throne of th' Eternal ;
Who in eye of Nature
Behold the Creator ;
And tremble adoring,
'Fore the rays of his power
In the sun, in the flower,
In the greatest and least,
And with thirst are possest
For of life the spring ;
Who, O powerful sprite
Of the times departed !
See thy look bright
From the relic's sides darted :
For them our Be once more shall ring.

" Nature's son, whose name
Is unknown to fame,
But his acre tilling,
Strong-armed and tall,
Like his forefathers all,
Him to honour we're willing,
He shall find the second token !'
They vanished, this spoken.

Hrymfaxe, den sorte,
Puster og dukker
Og i Havet sig begraver :
Morgenens Porte
Delling oplukker ;
Skinfaxe traver
I straalende Lue
Paa Himmelens Bue.

Ved lune Skov
Öxnene trække
Den tunge Plov
Over sorten Dække.

Da standser Ploven
En Gysen farer
Igjennem Skoven ;
Fugleskaren
Pludselig tier ;
Hellig Taushed
Alt indvier.

Da klinger i Muld
Det gamle Guld.

Black Hrymfax weary
Panteth and bloweth,
And in sea himself buried ;
And Delling cheery
Morn's gates ope throweth ;
Forth Skinfax hurrieth,
On heaven's bridge prancing,
And with lustre glancing.

By the bright green shaw
The oxen striding
The heavy plough draw,
The soil dividing.

The plough stops ; sorest
Of shudders rushes
Right through the forest ;
The bird-quire hushes
Sudden its strains ;
Holy silence
O'er all reigns.

Then rings in the mould
The ancient gold.

Tvende Glimt fra Oldtidsdage
  Funkle i de nye Tider;
Selsomt vendte de tilbage,
  Gaadefyldt paa blanke Sider.

Skjulte Helligdom omsvæver
  Deres gamle Tegn og mærker;
Guddomsglorien ombæver
  Evighedens Underværker.

Hædre dem ved Bön og Psalter;
  Snart maaske er hver forsvunden.
Jesu Blod paa Herrens Alter
  Fylde dem, som Blod i Lunden.

Men I see kun Guldets Lue,
  Ikke de Ærværdighöie!
Sætte dem som Pragt tilskue
  For et mat, nysgjerrigt Öie!

Himlen sortner, Storme brage!
  Visse Time, du er kommen.
Hvad de gav, de tog tilbage—
  Evig bortsvandt Helligdommen.

Glimpses two from period olden
  Lo! in modern time appearing;
Strange returned those glimpses golden,
  On their sides enigmas bearing.

Holiness mysterious hovers
  O'er their signs, of meaning pond'rous;
Glory of the Godhead covers
  These eternal works so wondrous.

Reverence them, for nought is stable;
  They may vanish, past all seeking.
Let Christ's blood on Christ's own table
  Fill them, once with red blood reeking.

But their majesty unviewing,
  And their lustre but descrying,
Them as spectacles ye're shewing
  To the silly and the prying.

Storm-winds bellow, blackens heaven!
  Comes the hour of melancholy;
Back is taken what was given,—
  Vanished is the relic holy.

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

THE BROTHER AVENGED

AND

OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
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THE BROTHER AVENGED

I STOOD before my master's board,
  The skinker's office plying ;
The herald-men brought tidings then
  That my brother was murdered lying.

I followed my lord unto his bed,
  By his dearest down he laid him ;
Then my courser out of the stall I led,
  And with saddle and bit arrayed him.

I sprang upon my courser's back,
  With the spur began to goad him ;
And ere I drew his bridle to,
  Full fifteen leagues I rode him.

And when I came to the noisy hall
  Where the Kemps carouse were keeping,
O then I saw my mother dear
  O'er the corse of my brother weeping.

Then I laid an arrow on my good bow,
  The bow that never deceived me;
And straight I shot the King's Kempions twelve,
  Of my brother who had bereaved me.

And then to the Ting I rode away,
  Where the judges twelve were seated;
Of six to avenge my brother I begged,
  And of six protection entreated.

For the third time rode I to the Ting,
  For deep revenge I lusted;
Up stood the liege-man of the King,
  And at me fiercely thrusted.

Up stood the liege-man of the King,
  With a furious thrust toward me;
And the Judges twelve rose in the Ting,
  And an outlaw'd man declared me.

Then I laid an arrow on my good bow,
  And the bow to its utmost bent I;
And into the heart of the King's liege-man
  The sharp, sharp arrow sent I.

Then away from the Ting amain I sped,
  And my good steed clomb in hurry;
There was nothing for me but to hasten and flee,
  And myself 'mong the woods to bury.

And hidden for eight long years I lay
  Amid the woods so lonely;
I'd nothing to eat in that dark retreat
  But grass and green leaves only.

I'd nothing to eat in that dark retreat,
  Save the grass and leaves I devoured;
No bed-fellows crept to the place where I slept,
  But bears that brooned and roared.

So near at hand was the holy tide
  Of our Lady of mercies tender;
The King of the Swedes his followers leads,
  And rides to the Church in splendour.

So I laid an arrow on my good bow,
  As I looked from the gap so narrow ;
And into the heart of the Swedish King
  I sent the yard-long arrow.

Now lies on the ground the Swedish King,
  And the blood from his death-wound showers ;
So blythe is my breast, though still I must rest
  Amid the forest bowers.

THE EYES

To kiss a pair of red lips small
  Full many a lover sighs;
If I kiss anything at all,
  Let it be Sophy's eyes.
The eyes, the eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care;
Too dear I prize the eyes, the eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

Were I the Czar, my kingly crown,
  My troops and victories,
And fair renown I'd all lay down
  To kiss but Sophy's eyes.

The charming eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care ;
Too dear I prize the charming eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

Perhaps I've seen a fairer face,
  Though hers may well surprise ;
A form perhaps of lovelier grace,
  But, oh ! the eyes, the eyes !
The matchless eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care ;
I well may prize the matchless eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

What with the polished diamond-stone
  Can vie beneath the skies ?
Oh, it is vied and far outshone
  By Sophy's beaming eyes.
By Sophy's eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care ;
Well may I prize the beaming eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

The sun of June burns furiously,
  And brooks and meadows dries ;
But, oh, with more intensity
  Burn cruel Sophy's eyes!
The wicked eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care ;
Too dear I prize the wicked eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

O, soon beneath their piercing ray,
  Like some parched plant which dies,
Wither shall I, poor youth, away ?
  And all for Sophy's eyes.
But bless the eyes, whose witcheries
  Have filled my heart with care ;
Till Death I'll prize and bless the eyes
  Of Sophy Ribeaupierre.

HARMODIUS AND ARISTOGITON

From the Greek

WITH the leaves of the myrtle I'll cover my brand,
Like Harmodius and Aristogiton of yore ;
When the tyrant they slew, and their dear native land
They caused with just laws to be governed once more.

O, beloved Harmodius! thou still art not dead,
In the Isles of the Blest thou still livest, they say ;
Where the swift-heel'd Achilles and bold Diomed
Through sweet flowery meadows continually stray.

With the leaves of the myrtle I'll cover my blade,
Like Harmodius and Aristogiton of yore;
Who, whilst the high rites to Athena were paid,
The bold tyrant Hipparchus extended in gore.

And on earth ever, ever your glory shall glow,
Harmodius and Aristogiton, sun-bright;
Because ye the damnable tyrant laid low,
And restored to your country her law and her right.

MY DAINTY DAME

My dainty Dame, my heart's delight,
Star of my watch, serene and bright ;
Come to the green wood, mild is May,
Cosy the arbours, come away !

In me thy spouse and servant see,
To silvan hall I'll usher thee ;
Thy bed shall be the leaves heaped high,
Thy organ's note the cuckoo's cry.
Thy covert warm the kindly wood,
No fairer form therein e'er stood.
Thy dress, my beauteous gem, shall be
Soft foliage stript from forest tree ;
The foliage best the forest bore,
Served as a garb for Eve of yore.

Thou, too, throughout the summer day
Shalt rove around in Eve's array.
My Eve thou art, my ever dear,
Thy Adam I'll attend and cheer.

Come to the green wood, come away,
The floor with grass and flowers is gay!
There 'neath no tree shalt thou descry
In churlish guise old jealousy.
Fear not my love, afar is now
The loon, thy tiresome lord, I trow;
To all a jest amidst his clan
He choler deals in Cardigan.
Here, nestled nigh the sounding sea,
In Ifor's bush we'll ever be.
More bliss for us our fate propounds
On Taf's green banks than Teivi's bounds;
Thy caitiff wight is scarce aware
Where now we lurk, my little fair.
Ah! better here, in love's sweet thrall,
To hark the cuckoo's hearty call,
Than pine through life in castle hall!

GRASACH ABO

OR

THE CAUSE OF GRACE

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thy turrets are tall,
Descried from their top is the oncoming foe;
Though numerous the warriors that watch on thy wall,
Thy hope and thy trust are in Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thy chieftains abound
With courage no dangers can ever lay low;
In the day of the fight can their equals be found,
When is roared to the heaven's heights Grasach Abo?

O, Baillie Na Cortie! brave helps thou hast nigh,
Will rise at thy summons full quickly I trow;
The Shortuls, Roothes, Shees, clans so mighty and high,
Will rise on the foemen of Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thy banner shall bound
Blood red in the winds o'er the battle that blow;
When thy lion so gallant breathes terror around,
And thy soldiers are shouting out Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thy armoury boasts
The arms of great chiefs on the wall in a row;
Gilliepatrick let fall, and O More of the hosts,
When they ran in red rout before Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! when blazed the bright swords,
Thy sons gave the Butlers a signal o'erthrow;
When Desmond was scattered with all his dark hordes,
He loathed the wild war whoop of Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thou needest no aid
Of strangers the day when the blood torrents flow;
The Brennaghs, Powrs, Purcels with buckler and blade,
Shall triumph and feast with the Grasach Abo.

O, Baillie Na Cortie! thy bards hope to praise
Thee, thee through long ages undarkened with woe;
And him, thy brave chieftain, his bountiful ways,
And the heroes who bleed for the Grasach Abo.

DAGMAR

SICK in Ribe Dagmar's lying,
  Soon she'll be in Ringsted's wall ;
All the Dames in Denmark dwelling
  Unto her she bids them call.

" Fetch me four, fetch five, I pray ye,
  Fetch me those for wisdom famed ;
Fetch Sir Carl of Haves' sister,
  Little Kirstine is she named.

" Fetch the old, and fetch the youthful,
  Fetch the learned unto me ;
Fetch the lovely little Kirstine,
  Worthy all respect is she.

"Canst thou read and write, my darling?
  Canst thou ease the pains I bear?
Thou shalt ride upon my coursers,
  And the ruddy scarlet wear."

"Could I read and write, my lady,
  Blythely I would do the same;
Thy pains are than iron harder,
  'Tis with grief I that proclaim."

'Twas the lovely little Kirstine,
  Took the book and read a space—
"Ah, thy pains than steel are harder,
  God Almighty help thy case!"

THE ELF BRIDE*

THERE was a youthful swain one day
  Did ted the new mown grass ;
There came a gay and lovely may
  From out the nigh morass.
Clad in a dress of silk was she,
Green as the leaves which deck the tree,
Her head so winsomely to see
  With bulrush plaited was.

That lass he wooed, his suit she heeds,
  And married are the pair ;
To bridal bed his wife he leads—
  But what befell him there ?

* These stanzas should be compared with *The Elves*, printed in *The Nightingale, The Valkyrie and Raven, and Other Ballads*, 1913, pp. 25–26.

He found, fear-stricken and amaz'd,
That he a rough oak trunk embrac'd,
Instead of the enchanting waist
  Of his mysterious fair..

Then straight abroad a voice he heard,
  Which sang the window through ;
These were the words the voice proffer'd
  If my report be true :
" Come out to her whom thou didst wed !
Upon my mead thy couch is spread."
From this he guessed with some elf maid
  That he had had to do.

THE TREASURE DIGGER

O, WOULD that with last and shoe I had stay'd,
  Without wild desires;
And, ah! no trust in Satan had laid,
  That prince of liars!

Each Saturday night, when slept the rest,
  Away I stroll'd
To the forest, so murky and drear, in quest
  Of buried gold.

And then I beheld the hopping fire glow
  The briar behind;
And down to the earth my wishing-rod low
  Itself declin'd.

I dug then, and gripped the chest's ring amain,
  And held it stout ;
But the copper deceitful burst in twain,
  And the fiends laughed out.

Just, just as long was the treasure my own,
  As I trembled with fright ;
But soon as I held it secure, down, down
  It sank from sight.

Ye devilish pack, what grin ye at ?
  I fell not your prey ;
I'll trust no more in old women's chat,
  And in cross-shaped way.

I go by my last and shoe to stay,
  Without wild desires ;
And ne'er more in Satan I trust will lay,
  That prince of liars !

THE FISHER

THE fisherman saddleth his good winged horse,
To be on the deep seems to him his best course.

Against the white strand loud and hoarse the wave breaks,
And towards the strand now the fisherman makes.

And up when the fisher his fishing-line drew,
A fine golden fish on the hook met his view.

Then he laughed in his beard: "I've of fish seen a store,
But ne'er one with golden cloth kirtle before.

"If I a gold piece for each gold-scale possess'd,
With poverty I should no more be distrest."

With its tail the fish 'gan the bench furious to
smite,
And a strange dance it seemed to the fisherman's
sight.

"Thou wealthy man, be not, I pray thee, so gay,
A much quieter part a poor fisher should play."

The golden fish heard every word as it lay,
Began straight to talk and discourse in this
way:—

"I'm full as rich, fisherman, as thou art poor,
And soon for thee happiness I will procure.

"Straight cast me again in the ocean my home,
And a well-doing man thou, I swear, shalt be-
come.

"The Queen of the ocean my mother is, know,
She linen and bolsters on thee shall bestow.

"My father is King in the depths of the sea,
And healthy and strong he shall cause thee to
be.

"My lover he sorrows for me in the brine,
My golden cloth kirtle shall also be thine."

"For the sovereign of fishes I care not a straw,
On myself, if I did, I but laughter should draw.

"For thy mother's fine cushions I care little more,
My own Queen could make better ware any hour.

"But if thou to a wooer thy troth didst allot,
The repose of two lovers destroy I will not."

The trembling gold fish in the water placed he:
"From such wretched captures the Lord preserve me!

"If to-morrow a like one upon my hook bite,
I shall perish of hunger, poor miserable wight."

He the rest of the day sat at home by his hearth
And spake not a word that repeating is worth.

He early next morn in his boat his seat took,
And straightway adjusted a bait to his hook.

And soon as he'd overboard cast the fish-line,
The float it descended deep under the brine.

Then he laughed in his beard, and with bitterness said :
" A catch of another gold fish I have made ! "

The thin lengthy line he up-drew half unwilling,
And, behold ! there upon the hook hung a gold shilling.

And I can forsooth and for certainty say,
That he for delight had no rest the whole day.

But as oft as the line he up-drew from the tide,
Upon the hook never a fish he descried.

For whene'er for the fish he upon the hook sought,
He found that a shilling of gold he had caught.

THE CUCKOO

ABIDING an appointment made,
Upon the weed-grown steep I stayed,
One morning mild when May was new,
And fresh the down was fraught with dew.
The meads were flowering, bright the woods,
The branches yielding thousand buds.
My lips employed in song the while
On Morfydd of the merry smile.
'Twas then as round I cast my eye
With mighty wish the maid to spy;
Though, howsoe'er my sight I strained,
No glimpse of Morfydd I obtained.
I heard the cuckoo's voice arise,
Singing the song which most I prize.
To each Bard true most sweet I trow
His music on the mountain's brow.

Therefore, as called by courtesy,
I greeted him in poesy.

"Good day, dear Cuckoo, with thy strain
A herald thou from heaven's domain;
To us the tidings thou dost bear
Of summer, blissful season fair.
Of summer which to greenwood shade
Entices forth the Bard and maid;
Which decks with foliage dense the grove,
And through all nature breathes of love.
O, dear to me that note of thine,
It seasons love like choicest wine;
Whilst, doating fondness to chastise,
What cutting taunt in 'Cuckoo' lies!
But, pretty bird, I pray declare
Where lingereth now my lady fair?"

"O, poet, what delusion great
Doth fill this year thy foolish pate?
'Tis harbouring a useless pain
One thought of her to entertain.
With all her store of winning charms,

She weds her to another's arms.
Believe me, when I say to thee
A mate of thine she may not be."

"Hush, hush, I'll not believe thy voice,
Dare not defame my bosom's choice.
That nymph, the fairest 'neath the sun,
Has sworn an oath, a solemn one;
She vowed by her baptismal rite,
Beneath the bough one blessed night,
Her hand my own enclasping hard,
To live and die with me, her Bard.
The minister that mystic night
Was Madog Benfras, matchless wight.
Her suitors all may vainly sigh,
How should she wed, whom wed have I?
'Tis false, O Bird, what thou dost state,
And waste of time with thee to prate.
Folly and drunkenness, 'tis plain,
Have got possession of thy brain.
Hence with thy news, and get thee cool,
Thou art, I fear, a very fool!"

"O, Dafydd, who the fool but thou,
Talking this guise beneath the bough?
Another husband chooses she,
Whose charms deceitful captured thee.
The Damsel of the neck of snow
Is now another's wife, I trow.
To love another's looks not well,
The Bow Bach owns the blooming belle."

"For what thou'st sung within the grove,
With malice filled, about my love,
May days of winter come with speed,
The summer and the sun recede;
Hoar frost upon the foliage fall,
The wood and branches withering all.
And thou with piercing cold be slain,
Thou horrid bird of hateful strain!"

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

ULF VAN YERN

AND

OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

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ULF VAN YERN

It was youthful Ulf Van Yern
  Goes before the King to stand:
"To avenge my father's death
  Lend me warriors of thy band."

"Of my kemps I'll lend thee them
  Who to follow thee consent;
Ask'st thou Vidrik Verlandson
  Thou wilt further thy intent.

"I will lend thee of my men,
  Thou shalt have the very flower;
Vidrik, and stark Diderik,
  Many kemps have felt their power.

"They are heroes strong and bold
  Who have battles often won;
Feared are they in every land
  Where their names' renown has gone."

In walked he, the good Dane King,
  Glittering like the morning star:
"Which of ye, my Danish swains,
  Will attend my friend to war?"

Stalked the King along the floor,
  Bore a gold cup in his hand:
"Which of ye, my courtmen, will,
  Follow Wolf with shield and brand?"

To their mouths their hats they held,
  None to answer him made haste,
Save bold Vidrik Verlandson,
  Of them all he made a jest.

It was Vidrik Verlandson
  Of his comrades made a sport:
"Sure 'tis but to guzzle mead
  We are gathered here at court."

Wrathful Diderik straight became,
  Frantic at that word he grew;
Off he smote two warriors' heads,
  At the King's foot them he threw.

Then spake Vidrik Verlandson,
  His whole thought on honor lies:
"We'll dispatch our messenger
  And not go in stealthy guise."

It was youthful Hammergray
  Hurried from the city gate;
Every one on him that looked
  Lost his voice and colour straight.

Hark away, young Hammergray,
  Gold is glittering on thy breast;
Ne'er was found or hawk or hound
  Could with Hammer's speed contest.

Pearls upon his bosom shone,
  Folks thereat astounded gaze:
Fowl was none beneath the sun
  Could with youthful Hammer race.

Swift into the King's high hill
  Bounded youthful Hammergray:
He was nimble at the tongue,
  And could speak in gallant way.

"King of Brattens Vendel, hail!
And the rest that fill your hall;
Ulf Van Yern to-morrow comes
To avenge his father's fall."

"Better had he be at home
Tending sheep beneath the height,
Better than a message send
That he thither comes to fight.

"Better had he crawl at home
Like a worm the rock beneath,
Than the war-like struggle dare
Where his father sank in death.

"He at home had better stay,
Crouch and shake the bush below;
One blow only stood his sire,
He'll not stand me half a blow."

"King of Brattens Vendel, hear,
Keep your tongue behind your tooth;
Quickly grows the young whelp up,
Full of threatening fangs his mouth."

"In the world no warrior wight
  Lives for whom I need to care,
Save 'tis Vidrik Verlandson,
  And I trow he'll not be there."

Answered then the Hammergray,
  Answered to the Monarch's fright:
"It is Vidrik Verlandson
  Will our army lead in fight."

Rose a Brattens Vendel kemp,
  And he shouted lustily:
"Well, full well, I Vidrik know,
  Offspring of a blacksmith he.

"Once was I at Birtingsborg
  As the kempions drank their fill,
There he played a play which lives
  In my mind, and ever will.

"Fifteen kemps to death he smote,
  And he deemed it but as game;
Nigh at hand I gazing stood,
  Ashy pale my cheeks became."

"Listen now, young Hammergray,
  Strongly I entreat of thee,
If of Vidrik aught thou know,
  Not to keep it hid from me."

"Sick in bed if Vidrik lay,
  Nor could sword nor buckler yield,
Many a Danish swain you'd find
  Would await you in the field."

Loudly answered then the King,
  Through his veins rushed courage warm:
"I'll to-morrow, if I live,
  Meet ye in the battle's storm."

From beside the King's right hand
  Rose a kemp, a stalwart one:
"What care we for such like foes?
  Vidrik's but a blacksmith's son."

It was the young Hammergray,
  At that word his wrath boiled o'er;
Straight he smote the kempion dead,
  Dead he tumbled on the floor.

Said the Monarch with a cry,
  While with rage his cheek grew white :
"Why hast thou my bravest kemp
  Smit to death before my sight?"

Thereto answered Hammergray,
  As the King he fiercely eyed :
"I could ne'er with patience hear
  Verland's valiant son decried."

Straight away rushed Hammergray,
  Soon he stood by Vidrik knight :
"Whet your spears, and sharp your swords,
  For the King is bent on fight."

All the mirky night they rode
  O'er the dusky heathery down,
Still a light like that of day
  From their polished weapons shone.

Over Birting's moor they rode,
  And through Birting's swamp in haste ;
Full seven hundred were the kemps,
  All in hard cuirasses cas'd.

Towards Birting on they rode,
  Birting's city they rode through ;
Then they formed them in a ring,
  And made Vidrik chief anew.

On the down their flag they pitched,
  Therein you a lion may spy ;
Now must many an innocent man
  Bid to life a long good-bye !

Long they fought with sword and bow,
  Each essayed his best to do ;
From their brows burst ruddy sweat,
  From their bucklers fire out flew.

It was then the Vendel King,
  From his helm a glance he cast :
" Say, who leads that band to-day,
  That my people fall so fast ? "

Straight replied the little page,
  To the King rode next of all :
" Sir, 'tis Vidrik Verlandson,
  Sits upon his courser tall."

Answered one of the King's kemps,
  Who had been in many fields :
" Yes, 'tis Vidrik Verlandson,
  Mimmering* in his hand he wields."

Thereto made the King reply,
  As another glance he throws :
" 'Gainst the shield I ill shall fight
  Which the tongs and hammer shows.

" 'Gainst the shield I ill shall fight
  Which the tongs and hammer bears,
This day I am doomed to die,
  For fierce Vidrik no one spares.

" Heathen wight, and Christian knight,
  I would fight with glad and fain ;
Only not with Verland's son,
  For from him I scathe must gain."

Ha ! Hurrah ! the Vendel King
  In his steed the rowels drove ;
Desperate he at Vidrik went,
  Desperate he to fell him strove.

* Vidrik's sword.

Bravely done, thou Vendel King,
  Fast and hard thy strokes are plied
E'en to his good saddle bow
  Vidrik stoops his helm of pride.

"I've from thee borne eighteen blows,
  They are, Sir, nor more nor fewer,
For thy kingly honor now
  But one blow from me endure."

"If thou eighteen blows hast borne
  Be they fewer or be they more,
I'll the self-same number take,
  Gift of love can break their power."

Forth a silken thread he drew
  Tied it round his helm of gold :
"My heart's dear shall never hear
  Blow of blacksmith laid me cold."

Vidrik spake to Mimmering :
  "Show thou'rt yet for something good ;
I can say for fifteen years
  I more fiercely have not hew'd."

Grasped he then the hilt so hard
  From his nails that blood outstarted,
On the Monarch's helm he hew'd,
  To the navel him he parted.

Shouted Vidrik Verlandson,
  Standing on the verdant height :
" Be there one of all your host
  Who has further wish to fight ? "

Now the Brattens Vendel King
  Lies out pouring blood like water :
Vengeance now has Ulf Van Yern,
  Vengeance for his father's slaughter.

It was youthful Hammergray
  Glanced around the bloody field :
" So like mice in their first sleep
  Hushed the foemen lie, and still'd."

Gladly back with Ulf Van Yern
  Rode the Dane King's chivalry ;
For his sire avenged he thanked
  Vidrik oft and fervently.

THE CHOSEN KNIGHT

SIR OLUF rode forth over hill and lea
  Full seven mile broad and seven mile wide,
But no one living discovered he
  Who a joust with him dare ride.

He saw, whilst forward glancing,
A gallant knight advancing,
Black was his courser, his helm was lac'd,
He came with bounding haste.

Upon his spurs all gory
Twelve gilded birdies bore he ;
Each time with the rowel he pricked his horse
The birdies sang with all their force.

Twelve gilt wheels on his bridle
He bore, nor were they idle ;
Each time through them the breezes blew,
How quickly around the little wheels flew.

He carried before his breast
A long lance, placed in rest ;
Far sharper than diamond was that lance,
It laid Sir Oluf in deadly trance.

Aloft on his helm he show'd
  A chaplet of red glare ;
Three maidens in proof of their love bestow'd,
  The youngest was so fair.

Sir Oluf enquired of the knight,
An he were come down from the realms of light:
" Art thou the Christ, for if thou be,
I'll willingly bend before thee the knee ? "

" I am not the Christ of power,
Thou need'st not before me cower ;
An unknown knight thou see'st in me,
Sent forth by three maids of high degree."

" If thou be a chosen knight
  Whom maidens three have sent this way,
Then for love of those damsels bright,
  Thou shalt joust with me to-day."

The first course they together rode
  Of their coursers trial made they,
The second course they together rode
  Their best manhood well display'd they.

The third joust they together rode
  Neither one the other humbled,
But the fourth joust they together rode
  Dead to the green earth they tumbled.

Now on the wold the heroes lie,
  With their blood the grass is red;
In the chamber high sit the maids and sigh,
  But the youngest soon is dead.

SIR SWERKEL

THERE'S a dance in the hall of Sir Swerkel the Childe,
There dances fair Kirstine, her hair hanging wild.

There dance the good King and his nobles so gay,
Fair Kirstine before them she warbles a lay.

His hand to the maiden Sir Swerkel stretched free:
"Come hither and dance, little Kirstine, with me."

Her finger he pressed, and moved up to her near:
"Sweet Kirstine, I pray thee become my heart's dear."

Her finger he pressed, on her sandal trod he :
"Fair Kirstine, with pity my agonies see!"

They danced to the left, and they danced to the right,
And her troth the fair damsel bestowed on the knight.

Upon him Sir Swerkel his red mantle throws,
And to the high hall to his mother he goes.

"Hail, hail as thou sittest here, dear mother mine!
I come from betrothing the little Kirstine."

"Our Lady forbid, and our Lady forfend,
Relations like ye to betroth should pretend.

"In wedlock united ye never must be,
For brother and sister, believe me, are ye."

"Now tell me, I pray thee, O dear mother mine!
What time thou didst bring forth the little Kirstine."

"The time that thou wast on thy journey to Rome,
I bore the sweet flowret that's now in full bloom.

"Whilst thou to the sepulchre holy wast gone,
I bore the fair mirror thy love that hast won.

"In the court of the Queen she was reared up with care,
And scarlet and sable accustomed to wear."

"Now give me thy counsel, O dear mother mine,
How I may forget her, the little Kirstine?"

"Go chase thou the hart, and go chase thou the hind,
And thou wilt her image soon chase from thy mind.

"Go chase thou the hart, and go chase thou the roe,
And thou thy love-longing wilt quickly forego."

He chased the proud hart, and he chased the swift hind,
But he never could chase the fair maid from his mind.

He chased the tall hart, and he chased the sleek roe,
But the longing of love from his mind would not go.

So the knight from the country was driven at last,
And into a cloister the maiden was cast.

No little bird shaped from the far land its flight
Than enquiry she made for her dear betrothed knight.

A bird ne'er so little across the sea stray'd
But he enquired after his dear betrothed maid.

FINN AND THE DAMSEL
OR
THE TRIAL OF WITS.

"WHAT'S rifer than leaves?" Finn cried.
"Dew is more rife," the damsel replied.

"Hotter than fire?" Finn cried.
"The face of a kind-hearted man," she replied,

"When chance to his hut the stranger doth guide,
And unable he is for his guest to provide."

"Swifter than wind?" Finn cried.
"The vigour of woman," the damsel replied.

"Sweeter than honey?" Finn cried.
"The words of affection," the damsel replied.

"Ranker than bane?" Finn cried.
"A foeman's abuse," the damsel replied.

"More black than the crow?" Finn cried.
"Death is yet blacker," the damsel replied.

"More sharp than the sword?" Finn cried.
"Woman's sense at a pinch," the damsel replied.

"What's best of all gems?" Finn cried.
"A knife or a dirk," the damsel replied.

"Softer than down?" Finn cried.
"Love's palm on your cheek," the damsel replied.

"A ship for all cargoes?" Finn cried.
"The tongs of the smith," the damsel replied.

"Whiter than snow?" Finn cried.
"Truth is more white," the damsel replied.

"How many trees are there?" Finn cried.
"The green and the sere make two," she replied.

"What's reddest of red?" Finn cried.
"The flush of the freeman when praised," she replied.
"Or when praise to his merit is meanly denied."

"Than the radish more brittle?" Finn cried.
"The nature of woman," the damsel replied.

"What never grows old nor betied?"
"The friendship of man," the damsel replied.

"What does woman love best?" Finn cried.
"A fair or a dance," the damsel replied.

"What's best for your colour?" Finn cried.
"Cool air and good sleep," the damsel replied.

"How many steeds are there?" Finn cried,
"But two, a horse and a mare," she replied.

"What's best of all food?" Finn cried,
"Nought better than milk," the damsel replied.

"What adorns a man most?" Finn cried,
"High deeds, humble words," the damsel replied.

"The worst of all fare?" Finn cried.
"Strong drink, if it be too freely supplied,
Or the prate of a fool," the damsel replied.

EPIGRAMS BY CAROLAN

On Friars

WOULD'ST thou on good terms with friars live,
  Ever be humble and admiring;
All they ask of thee freely give,
  And in return be nought requiring.

On a surly Butler,
who had refused him admission to the cellar

O Dermod Flynn it grieveth me
  Thou keepest not Hell's portal;
As long as thou should'st porter be,
  Thou would'st admit no mortal.

Lines

How deadly the blow I received
When of thee, O my darling, bereaved!
No more up the hill I shall bound,
No strength in my poor foot is found;
No joy o'er my visage shall break
'Till from out the cold earth I awake.
Of the corn like the very top grain,
Or the pine 'mongst the shrubs of the plain,
Or the moon 'mongst the starlets above,
Went thou amongst women, my love!

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies

THE EXPEDITION TO BIRTING'S LAND

AND OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

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THE EXPEDITION TO BIRTING'S LAND

THE King he o'er the castle rules,
  He rules o'er all the land ;
O'er many a hardy hero too,
  With naked sword in hand.

Let the courtier govern his steed,
  The boor his thatchèd cot,
But Denmark's King o'er castles rules,
  For nobler is his lot.

King Diderik sits on Brattingsborg,
  And round he looks with pride :
" No one I know of in the world
  Would me in fight abide."

Then answered Brand Sir Viferlin,
  Had been in many a land:
"Methinks I know a warrior stout
  Would thee in fight withstand.

"He's Ifald call'd, a king is he,
  In Birting's land afar;
And he has fellows following him
  With savage wolves who war.

"O he has fellows following him
  'Gainst teeth of bears who fight;
The food in which he most delights
  Is flesh of Christian wight.

"Every day in the East that dawns
  His mouth he's wont to cool
With serpents, toads, and other filth,
  That come from the hellish pool."

As Ifald sat on his throne that day
  He thus was heard to cry:
"Let some one bid my little foot page
  To come to me instantly.

"Now list to me, thou little foot page,
  On my errand thee I'll send
Unto the King of Brattingsborg,
  To whom I am no friend.

"Tell him that he must tribute pay,
  Or for bloody war prepare;
Forsooth if him in the field I meet
  I him will little spare."

Then answered straight the little foot page
  And a gallant answer he gave:
"My Lord thy message I'll carry forth,
  Though they lay me in my grave."

In came he, the little foot page,
  And stood before the board:
"Now list to me, King Diderik,
  My master has sent you word.

"Either tribute thou shalt pay,
  As thou didst last year agree,
Or thou shalt meet us in the field,
  And bloodshed there shall be."

"I will not tribute pay, forsooth,
  I scorn to stoop so low;
Nay, rather unto Birting's land
  With sword unsheathed I go."

Then answer'd Vitting Helfredson,
  And loud he laughed with glee:
"If ye fare this year into Birting's land
  I too of the troop shall be.

"Last year wast thou in Birting's land,
  And there didst lose thy steed;
Thou hadst better stay in Brattingsborg
  Than again seek Birting's mead."

"On me, if I stay in Brattingsborg,
  Be every malison;
If I have no horse on which to ride
  I have legs on which to run."

There rode out from Brattingsborg
  So many a knight renown'd;
The rocks were split 'neath the coursers' feet,
  And quaked the startled ground.

There rode forth King Diderik,
  The lion upon his shield ;
And there too glittered the golden crown
  So far across the field.

There rode Vidrik Verlandson,
  The hammer and tongs he bore ;
And there rode good King Esmer's sons,
  All men of wondrous power.

There rode the rich Count Rodengard,
  A warrior stout and fine ;
And there rode King Sir Sigfred, who
  Displayed a monarch's sign.

Then followed Siward Snarenswayne,
  With many arrows white ;
And then came Brand Sir Viferlin,
  Who never fled from fight.

And next rode Hero Hogen,
  He looked a rose so brave ;
And then rode Folker Spillemand,
  In his hand a naked glaive.

Then rode the bold young Ulf Van Yern,
  A glorious horse upon ;
Behind him young Sir Humble rode,
  And then Sir Sigfredson.

And then rode Gunther and Gernot,
  With arrow on bended bow ;
And there rode Sonne Tolkerson,
  With courage upon his brow.

There rode the little Grimmer,
  In golden acton dight ;
And there rode Seyer the active,
  Who yields to none in might.

And then came master Hildebrand,
  As though to his courser fixt ;
The stalwart friar Alsing rode
  The ancient hero next.

There rode Orm the Ungarswayne,
  So bold of heart was he ;
So joyous were they every one,
  And sure of victory.

Out galloped they all from Brattingsborg,
  As fast as they could speed ;
But Vitting bold came running behind,
  Because he had no steed.

It was hardy Angelfyr,
  To Grimselin he cried :
" O, he must on his bare legs run
  Who has no horse to ride ! "

And still ran Vitting, and still ran he,
  Till with wrath he nigh was wode ;
Then he struck a warrior from his horse
  And sat himself on, and rode.

It was Sir King Diderik,
  He back a glance did throw :
" O yonder I see the courtier ride
  Who on foot was wont to go.

" Here thou, Vitting Helfredson,
  Thou art a warrior bold ;
Thou shalt hie forward to Birting's land,
  And demand the tribute gold.

"With thee shall Vidrik Verlandson,
  And Diderik knight of Bern;
Of all my troop they are best at blows,
  And most for battle yearn."

They set themselves upon their steeds,
  And away they rode like wind;
The knights they roared, and their steeds they
    gored,
  For wroth were they in mind.

The watchman stood on the battlement
  From whence he far could see:
"Yonder I warriors three espy
  Who wrathful seem to be.

"The one is Vitting Helfredson
  Who lost his steed last year;
That a rugged guest he'll prove to us
  We have full cause to fear.

"The second is Vidrik Verlandson,
  As the tongs and hammer shew;
The third is Diderik Van Bern,
  All warriors good, I trow."

They left their steeds in the castle yard,
  To the castle strode they in ;
Then might each man by their faces see
  A fray would soon begin.

Upon the porter they laid their hands,
  And him to pieces hew'd ;
Then in they strode to the high, high hall,
  And before the King they stood.

Then up rose Ifald the King in rage,
  And thus the King did cry :
"O, whence are come the ill-starr'd loons
  Before my board I spy ?"

Then answered the skinker of the King,
  Who skinkèd wine and mead :
"Our sharp spears, if we ply them well,
  Will drive them out with speed."

It was Vitting Helfredson,
  By the beard the skinker has ta'en ;
He smote him a blow the ear below,
  Which dashed out half his brain.

He flung the dead corse on the board,
  And a merry jest had he:
"Who'll taste," said Vitting Helfredson,
  "This precious roast for me?"

Then forth stepped Diderik Van Bern,
  And, brandishing his glaive,
He hewed upon King Ifald's head,
  And him to the navel clave.

And forth stepped Vidrik Verlandson,
  And round began to hew;
Heads and arms were smitten off
  As round and round he flew.

In came King Ifald's mother grey,
  With an eldritch scream she came;
I tell to ye in verity
  There ensued a wondrous game.

Vitting struck her with his sword,
  A very fearful stroke;
But she kissed asunder the good sword,
  Into pieces three it broke.

With a single kiss of the witch's mouth
  Was shivered the trusty sword ;
Vitting the hag by the weazand seized,
  Without a single word.

The beldame changed herself to a crane,
  And flew to the clouds on high ;
But Vitting donned a feather robe,
  And pursued her through the sky.

They flew for a day, they flew for three,
  Bold Vitting and the crane ;
Then Vitting seized the crane by the legs,
  And her body rent in twain.

Homeward now, with sword in hand,
  The valiant comrades wended :
All the Birting kemps are dead,
  And the adventure ended.

THE SINGING MARINER

A Ballad from the Spanish

WHO will ever have again,
On the land or on the main,
Such a chance as happen'd to
Count Arnaldos long ago.

With his falcon in his hand,
Forth he went along the strand;
There he saw a galley gay,
Briskly bearing for the bay.

Ask me not her name and trade,—
All the sails of silk were made;
He who steer'd the ship along
Raised his voice, and sang a song.

Sang a song whose magic force
Calm'd the breaker in its course ;
While the fishes, sore amazed,
Left their holes and upward gazed.

And the fowl came flocking fast,
Round the summit of the mast ;
Still he sang to wind and wave :
" God preserve my vessel brave !

" Guard her from the rocks that grow
'Mid the sullen deep below ;
From the gust, and from the breeze,
Sweeping through Gibtarek's seas.

" From the gulf of Venice too,
With its shoals and waters blue ;
Where the mermaid chants her hymn,
Borne upon the billow's brim."

Forward stept Arnaldos bold,
Thus he spake, as I am told :
" Teach me, sailor, I entreat,
Yonder song that sounds so sweet."

But the sailor shook his head,
Shook it thrice, and briefly said:
"Never will I teach the strain
But to him who ploughs the main."

YOUTH'S SONG IN SPRING

O, SCARCELY is Spring a time of pure bliss,
He is wrong who full trust thereon layeth;
From many it may
Take sorrow away,
But to many it trouble conveyeth.

O, when every thing is as joyous in Spring,
As in heaven, that never is dreary;
'Tis a grievous case
If one mournful must pace,
And cannot be also merry!

THE NIGHTINGALE

Translated from the Danish

In midnight's calm hour the Nightingale sings
  Of freedom, of love, and delight:
Come, haste to the grove where melody rings,
  'Tis Philomel's notes that invite.
A fowler attentively follows her there,
Resolv'd for his victim to spread out a snare:
Think, girls, of the Nightingale's fate, and
beware!

In ambush his nets he carefully brings,
  Glad innocence feels no alarm;
Unguarded her flight—'midst danger she
  wings—
  And falls into sorrowful harm.

Alas! she is silent, and full of despair,
He glides away quick with his treasure so rare:
Think, girls, of the Nightingale's fate, and beware!

A beautiful cage adorns his fair prize,
In hope that for him she will sing;
But Freedom, that wafted her notes to the skies,
Bore Gladness away on its wing.
Thus you, Philomela, resemble the fair,
And we, we delight in the love that we share:
O, think of the Nightingale's fate, and beware!

LINES

SAY from what mine took Love the yellow gold
To form those tresses? from what thorn-bush tore
Those roses sleek? and from what summit bore
That stainless snow which seems no longer cold?

MORNING SONG

Nu rinder Solen op

FROM Eastern quarters now
  The sun's up-wandering,
His rays on the rock's brow
  And hill's side squandering.
Be glad, my soul! and sing amidst thy pleasure,
  Fly from the house of dust,
  Up with thy thanks, and trust
To heaven's azure!

O, countless as the grains
  Of sand so tiny,
Measureless as the main's
  Deep waters briny,
God's mercy is, which He upon me showereth.
  Each morning in my shell,
  A grace immeasurable
To me down-poureth.

Thou best dost understand,
  Lord God! my needing;
And placed is in Thy hand
  My fortune's speeding,
And Thou foresee'st what is for me most fitting.
  Be still, then, O my soul!
  To manage in the whole
Thy God permitting.

May fruit the land array,
  And corn for eating!
May truth e'er make its way,
  With justice meeting!
Give thou to me my share with every other,
  'Till down my staff I lay,
  And from this world away
Wend to another!

FROM THE FRENCH

THIS world by fools is occupied,
  And whom the sight of a fool displeases,
Within his chamber himself should hide,
  And break his looking-glass to pieces.

THE MORNING WALK

To the beech grove with so sweet an air
  It beckon'd me.
O, Earth! that never the cruel plough-share
  Had furrow'd thee!
In their dark shelter the flowerets grew,
  Bright to the eye,
And smil'd by my foot on the cloudlets blue,
  Which deck'd the sky.

To the wood through a field I took my way;
  There I could see
On the field an uppil'd stone-heap lay,
  'Twixt hillocks three;

So anciently grayly white it stood,
  An oblong ring :
Here doubtless was held in the old time good
  A royal Ting.

The royal stone, which there doth stand,
  The Stol-king press'd,
With crown on head, and sceptre in hand,
  In sables drest.
And every warrior solemnly pac'd
  Peaceful in thought,
And down on his stone himself calmly plac'd—
  No sword he brought.

The king's house stood on yonder height,
  With walls of power ;
On yon had his daughter, the damsel bright,
  Her maiden bower.
Upon the third the temple stood,
  Through the North famed wide,
Where to Thor was offered the he-goat's blood,
  In reeking tide.

O, lovely field! and forest fair,
  And meads grass-clad;
Her bride-bed Freya every where
  Enamelled had.
The corn-flowers rose in azure band
  From earthly cell;
Nought else could I do but stop and stand,
  And greet them well.

Welcome on earth's green breast again,
  Ye flowerets dear!
In spring how charming 'mid the grain
  Your heads ye rear.
Like stars 'midst lightning's yellow ray
  Ye shine red, blue:
O, how your summer aspect gay
  Delights my view.

O poet! poet! silence keep,
  God help thy case:
Our owner holds us sadly cheap,
  And scorns our race.

Each time he sees, he calls us scum,
  Or worthless tares ;
Hell-weeds that but to vex him come
  'Midst his corn-ears.

The greatest grace done for our sake
  In all his life,
Is from his pocket deep to take
  His huge clasp knife ;
And heavy handful then to cut,
  'Midst grumbling much—
Us with tobacco leaves to put
  In seal-skin pouch.

He says, he says, that smoked this way,
  We dross of the field,
To the world by chance, by poor chance, may
  Some benefit yield ;
But as for our beauty, our blue and red hues,
  'Tis folly indeed—
The mouth is his only test of use,
  And that's his creed.

O wretched mortals!—O wretched man!
  O wretched crowd!—
No pleasures ye pluck—no pleasures ye plan
  In life's lone road:—
Whose eyes are blind to the glories great
  Of the works of God;
And dream that the mouth is the nearest gate
  To joy's abode.

Come flowers! for we to each other belong,
  Come graceful elf,
And around my lute in sympathy strong
  Now wind thyself;
And quake as if mov'd by zephyr's wing,
  'Neath the clang of the chord,
And a morning song with glee we'll sing
  To our Maker and Lord!

LONDON:

Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.

Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

QUEEN BERNGERD
THE BARD AND THE DREAMS
AND
OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1913

QUEEN BERNGERD

THE BARD AND THE DREAMS

AND OTHER BALLADS

The Bard and the Dreams.

O'er the sweet smelling meads with his lyre in his hand
The Bard was straying
In the twilight of evening refreshing and bland
His chords were playing:
He sang of the flowrets that slept in the tomb
He sang of the flowrets that pour'd their perfume
He sang of the flowrets that yet were to bloom;
And the rose departed
A smile from its sepulchre darted,
And the rose yet living with blushes of red
Breath'd sweets o'er his head,
And the rose which unborn conceal'd yet lies
Seem'd to open before his eyes.
By a fountain's side with verdure array'd
Himself he laid;
And the murmur and hum of the pure water fleeting,
And the strains which the birds of the wood were repeating,
And the innocent heart, which so peaceful was beating,
Shed health-giving slumbers
On lids which no sorrow cumbers.

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QUEEN BERNGERD

Long ere the Sun the heaven arrayed,
For her morning gift her Lord she prayed :
" Give me Samsoe to have and to hold,
And from every maiden a crown of gold."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The King he answered Berngerd thus :
" Madam, crave something less of us,
For many a maid lives 'neath our sway
To 'scape from death could the like not pay."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" My gentle Lord, then hear my prayer,
Suffer not ladies the scarlet to wear ;
And, Sir, you must grant me this boon beside,
Let no boor's son a good courser ride."
Woe befall her Berngerd.

" What ladies can buy to wear they are free,
And hindrance none they shall meet from me ;
If the son of a Boor can a horse support,
'Fore God, I'll never destroy his sport ! "
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" My Lord, we'll that matter let drop to the ground ;
With chains of steel let the land be bound,
So that man or woman thereout or therein
Withouten toll cannot hope to win."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" How should we so much steel obtain,
As to bind therewith the land and main ?
O Madam ! some mercy and kindness shew,
Or expect the curse of the people now."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" To Ribe, to winter there, we'll depart,
There smiths we shall find well skilled in their art ;

Both locks and keys will we have made,
And toeen and iron palisade."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"Faggot and coal shall the boor give free,
The smith shall work without thanks or fee.
My Lord, be persuaded, I rede ye do,
Much benefit thence shall to thee accrue."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"My father was King in the land before me,
And a King for his father also had he;
The Kings of the Danes to live contrive
Without Boor and Burger skinning alive."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"Sir, what would a peasant more
Than a latticed window and wicker door?
What shall a peasant keep in his stall
Save one draught ox and a cow withall?
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" Each peasant's wife of a son made light
Shall give me an ounce of gold so bright ;
But if to a daughter birth she give,
Only the half I'm content to receive."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The King he turned on his other side,
He'd heard enough to suffice for that tide.
As soon as sleep his brow came o'er,
Dagmar he thought stood his face before.
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" The bitter flower, Sir King, you hold,
Brings you trouble, as I foretold.
Be sure if this year you seek the fray,
You suffer not Berngerd at home to stay.
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

" If she with her flatteries blind your eyes,
The child will weep in the cradle that lies.
Take her with you, I rede and beseech,
How that will boot you time will teach."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The King has proclaimed through the whole
country,
To the war with him each tenth man should hie.
"My dearest Lady, worthy thou art
In the field of honour to bear a part."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The first shaft shot on the battle day
To the heart of Berngerd found its way ;
No soul was seen with a tearful eye—
Who for Berngerd would sorrow or sigh ?
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

Now lies Berngerd in the cold black ground,
Oxen are still in the Boor's stall found.
Berngerd she lies 'neath the dingy sward,
The Danes their Monarch love and regard.
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

Now Berngerd lies in eternal pains,
The boor his horse and cow retains.
A name she left of such evil savour,
So little the poor man did she favour.
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

'Tis better to live in humble state,
Than rich with a poor man's curse and hate ;
After virtue better to ceaseless strain
Than the wealth of the world with scorn obtain.
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

DAME MARTHA'S FOUNTAIN

Dame Martha dwelt at Karisegaard,
  So many kind deeds she wrought:
If the winter were sharp and the rich man hard,
  Her gate the indigent sought.

With her hand the hungry she loved to feed,
  To the sick she lent her aid;
The prisoner oft from his chains she freed,
  And for souls of sinners pray'd.

Denmark's land was in peril dire,
  The Swede around burnt and slew;
The castle of Martha was wrapped in fire,
  To the church the good lady flew.

She dwelt in the tower both night and day,
  There unto her none repaired ;
'Neath the church roof sat the dull owl gray,
  And at the good lady stared.

In the house of the Lord she dwelt safe and content
  'Till the foes their departure had ta'en ;
Then back to her ruined castle she went,
  And bade it be builded again.

There found the houseless a cover once more,
  And the mouths of the hungry bread ;
But all in Karise-By * wept sore
  When they knew Dame Martha dead.

And when the Dame lay in her coffin and smil'd,
  So calm with her pallid face,
O there was never so little a child
  But was brought on her to gaze.

The bell on the day of the burial toll'd,
  And youth and age shed the tear ;
No man was ever so weak or old
  But helped to lift the bier.

* Karise-By = Karise Village.

When they the bier set down for a space,
  And rested upon the road,
A fountain sprang forth in that very place,
  To this hour has it flow'd.

God bless for ever the pious soul,
  Her blessings no lips can tell ;
For oft have the sick become sound and whole,
  Who drank at Dame Martha's well !

The tower yet stands with gloomy nook,
  Where Dame Martha sat of old ;
The stranger comes thereon to look,
  And to hear the story told.

THE BARD AND THE DREAMS

O'er the sweet smelling meads with his lyre in his hand
  The bard was straying;
In the twilight of evening, refreshing and bland,
  His chords were playing.
He sang of the flowrets that slept in the tomb,
He sang of the flowrets that poured their perfume,
He sang of the flowrets that yet were to bloom.

And the rose departed,
A smile from its sepulchre darted;
And the rose yet living with blushes of red
Breathed sweets o'er his head.
And the rose which unborn concealed yet lies,
Seemed to open before his eyes.
  By a fountain's side with verdure array'd
  Himself he laid.

And the murmur and hum of the pure water
fleeting,
And the strains, which the birds of the wood
were repeating,
And the innocent heart, which so peaceful was
beating,
Shed health-giving slumbers,
On lids which no sorrow cumbers.

In the visions of sleep there came to his side
A sire with locks snow-hoary ;
And the songster sped with that sire for his
guide
To an unknown territory.

On ruins majestic himself he found,
The mouldering bones of old heroes lay round ;
Their ghosts awaking
Rose from their graves wild gestures making.
The youth was quaking—
But the old man smiled as his mind he led
To the kempion times long fled.

Then a lamp in the night's deep silence shone
  Through the dingy mould,
And under the masses of fallen stone
  There glittered gold.

To the harp then pointing the sage disappears,
And the youth shed tears.
"Yes, yes, the young bard thy countenance
    knows,"
  So sang in wild passion the boy—
"Not in vain in my bosom a holy fire glows,
Not in vain thy bright lamp the grave's mystery
    shews,
  The bard will obey thee with joy."

Again there appeared in the dreams of the
    stripling
  A being who held him intent;
It came as in flood come the high billows
    rippling,
  Like billows when ebbing it went.

Though the look of an aged and slow female
wearing,
It ran like the breezes in spring time careering,
Full often it vanished with threatening bearing.
But suddenly caught he the fugitive wild,
And then by his breast a maiden smil'd.
"Thee often I've met on life's journey," he
said,
"And when like a meteor thou past me hast
sped,
I've seen thee look backward—and threaten.

O! kiss me, sweet maiden, ere on thou dost
stray,
I've seen thee with flowers strew the wanderer's
way.
They lived in their brightness,
When thou in this lightness,
Had'st fled farthest off; and sometimes they
became
A Bauta-stone over the worm-wasted frame.

Vouchsafe me a smile, said the youth, I entreat,
I know thy course lightning-fleet.
  Thy light pinions ever
  Thou pliest, sweet giver
  Of palms, verdant palms, to the stripling so clever,
Who caught thee, though lightning fleet."

Again to his eye a fair vision was given,
A being angelical stood in the heaven.
In morn's fresh rose-hues drest
Stood the spirit blest.
  As shines from above
  The starlet of love
So kindled his glance toward earth's gentle child.
  As the maid to her beckons the youth she loves dearly,
  When vespers are chiming and Luna shines clearly,
So toward him beckoned the Angel, and smil'd.

With rapture the songster took thither his way,
Where the winged one of heaven stood beauteous and gay.
But, just as he hoped that the height was surmounted,
Far distant again they each other confronted.
And still the Angel beckoned there,
But — never, never near.
"My seraph! wilt ever avoid my embrace?"
—Said the songster with mortified mien—
"But though I'm unable to climb to thy place,
My eye thou hast blest from the mansions of grace,
And thy heaven, thou distant, I've seen."

His slumber departed, his visions they fled,
But oft when he harped they came into his head.
"Blest, trebly blest, may our life be regarded,
For unto me hear threefold life is awarded.

"See the roselet departed,
A smile from its tomb has darted.
And the rose, which yet lives in blushes and bloom,
Breathes o'er me perfume.
Yes, from its concealment, the unborn rose
Before me seems to unclose."

KING OLUF THE SAINT

King Oluf and his brother bold,
  'Bout Norroway's rocks a parley hold.
    (*So sweet in Drontheim 'tis to dwell!*)

"The one of us two who best can sail,
  Shall rule o'er Norroway's hill and dale.

"Who first of us reaches our native ground,
  O'er all the region shall King be crown'd."

Then Harald Haardrode answer made:
  "Aye, let it be even as thou hast said.

"But if I to-day must sail with thee,
  Thou shalt change vessels, I swear, with me.

"For thou hast got the Dragon of speed,
  I shall make with the Ox a poor figure indeed.

"The dragon is swift as the clouds in chase,
The ox he moveth at lazy pace."

"Hear, Harald, what I shall say to thee,
What thou hast proposed well pleaseth me

"If my ship in aught be better than thine,
I'm readily, cheerfully lend thee mine.

"Do thou the Dragon so sprightly take,
And I with the Ox will the journey make..

"But first to the Church we'll bend our way,
Ere our hand on sail or on oar we lay."

And into the Church Saint Oluf trode,
His beautiful hair like the bright gold glow'd.

But soon out of breath there came a man:
"Thy brother is sailing off, fast as he can."

"Let them sail, my friend, who to sail may choose,
The word of our Lord we will not lose,

"The Mass is the word of our blessed Lord.
Take water, ye swains, for our table board.

"We will sit at board, and the bread we will taste,
Then unto the sea-shore will we haste."

Now down they all sped to the ocean strand,
Where the Ox lay rocking before the land.

And speedily they to the ocean bore
The anchor, and cable, the sail and oar.

Saint Oluf he stood on the prow when on board:
"Now forward, thou Ox, in the name of the Lord!"

He grappled the Ox by the horn so white:
"Hie now as if thou went clover to bite!"

Then forward the Ox began to hie,
In his wake roll'd the billows boisterously.

He hallooed to the lad on the yard so high:
"Do we the Dragon of Harald draw nigh?"

"No more of the pomps of the world I see,
Than the uppermost top of the good oak tree.

"I see, 'neath the land of Norroway, skim
Bright silken sails with a golden rim.

"I see, 'neath Norroway's mountains proud,
The Dragon bearing of sail a cloud.

"I see, I see, by Norroway's side,
The Dragon gallantly forward stride!"

On the ribs of the Ox a blow he gave:
"Now faster, faster, over the wave!"

He struck the Ox on the eye with force:
"To the haven much speedier thou must course!"

Then forward the Ox began to leap,
No sailor on deck his stand could keep.

Then cords he took, and his mariners fast
He tied to the vessel's sheets and mast.

'Twas then, 'twas then, the steersman cried:
"But who shall now the vessel guide?"

His white gloves off Saint Oluf throws,
And he himself to the rudder goes.

"O we will sail o'er cliff and height,
The nearest way like a line of light."

So o'er the hills and dales they career,
To them they became like water clear.

They sailed along o'er the mountains blue,
Then out came running the Elfin crew.

"Who sails o'er the gold in which we joy?
Our ancient father who dares annoy?"

"Elf, turn to stone and a stone remain,
Till I by this path return again!"

So they sailed o'er Skaaney's mountains tall,
And stones became the little elves all.

Out came a Carline, with spindle and rok:
"Saint Oluf! why sailest thou us to mock?

"Saint Oluf, thou who the red beard hast,
Through my chamber wall thy ship hath passed."

With a glance of scorn did Saint Oluf say:
"Stand there a flint rock for ever and aye!"

Unchided, unhindered, they bravely sailed on,
Before them yielded both stock and stone.

Still onward they sailed in such gallant guise,
That no man upon them could fix his eyes.

Saint Oluf a bow before his knee bent,
Behind the sail dropped the shaft he sent.

From the prow Saint Oluf a barb shot free,
Behind the Ox fell the shaft in the sea.

Saint Oluf he trusted in Christ alone,
And therefore home by three days he won.

That made Harald with fury storm,
Of a laidly dragon he took the form.

But the Saint was a man of devotion full,
And the Saint gat Norroway's land to rule.

Into the Church Saint Oluf strode,
He thanked the Saviour in fervent mode.

Saint Oluf walked the Church about,
There shone a glory his ringlets out.

Whom God doth help makes bravely his way,
His enemies win but shame and dismay.

TO SCRIBBLERS *

Would it not be more dignified
To run up debts on every side,
And then to pay your debts refuse,
Than write for rascally Reviews?
And lectures give to great and small,
In pothouse, theatre, and town-hall,
Wearing your brains by night and day
To win the means to pay your way?
I vow by, him who reigns in [hell],
It would be more respectable!

* Composed upon the occasion of the refusal by Lockhart to insert, in *The Quarterly Review*, Borrow's Essay suggested by Ford's *Hand-book for Travellers in Spain*, 1845, in the unmutilated and unamended form in which the author had written it.

TO A CONCEITED WOMAN

Be still, be still, and speak not back again.
What right have you to answer in this strain ?
Whilst I'm a man, a prince of the creation,
You're but a female woman by your station ;
A creature for man's sovereign service born,
Whose fitting wages are contempt and scorn.
A creature formed to dive down in the sea
To fetch up sea-eggs for the likes of me ;
Only too grateful, when we've stilled our greed,
If on our leavings you're allowed to feed.
If thus I speak, I speak on public grounds,
My only aim is to keep well in bounds.

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

THE FOUNTAIN OF MARIBO
AND OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1913

THE

FOUNTAIN OF MARIBO

AND OTHER BALLADS

Ramund.

Ramund thought he should a better man be
Of better apparel array'd him;
Of garments of leather and hemp patch'd together
The Queen then a present made him.
These I will not wear, bold Ramund he said,
They beseem me not fair, said Ramund the young.

"Your garments of tow and leather bestow
On the cleaners of trencher and platter."
The Lady to give him fresh clothes was not slow,
And of sammet and silk were the latter.
Yes! these I will wear, bold Ramund he said,
They beseem me right fair, said Ramund the young.

Ramund he into the chop now hies,
Where the best of all tailors was sitting:
"Now wilt thou, O tailor so dextrous and wise,
Make clothes for Ramund fitting?"
And why should I not, the tailor he said,
Then thou'lt do well, I wot, said Ramund the young.

Twice twenty five ells for the breeches take,
Fifteen for the points of the breeches,
And them thou must strong and durable make,
If thou therein set'st stitches

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THE FOUNTAIN OF MARIBO

OR

THE QUEEN AND THE ALGREVE

The Algreve* he his bugle wound
The long night all—
The Queen in bower heard the sound,
I'm passion's thrall.

The Queen her little page address'd,
The long night all—
"To come to me the Greve request,"
I'm passion's thrall.

* A title of dignity, equivalent to that of Count.

He came, before the board stood he,
The long night all—
"Wherefore, O Queen, has sent for me?"
I'm passion's thrall.

"As soon as e'er my lord is dead,
The long night all—
Thou shalt rule o'er my gold so red,"
I'm passion's thrall.

"O speak not, Queen, in such wild style,
The long night all—
Thou know'st not who may list the while,"
I'm passion's thrall.

She fondly thought alone they were,
The long night all—
There stood the King, to all gave ear,
I'm passion's thrall.

The King two serving men address'd,
The long night all—
"To come to me the Queen request,"
I'm passion's thrall.

"Hear thou, my Queen, so fair and sleek,
The long night all—
What with the Algreve didst thou speak?"
I'm passion's thrall.

"The speech that I with him did hold,
The long night all—
Was all about thy actions bold,"
I'm passion's thrall.

"The King two servants did command,
The long night all—
"Bid ye the Greve before me stand,"
I'm passion's thrall.

"Hear thou, my Greve, what with my Queen
The long night all—
Didst thou discourse of yesterc'en?"
I'm passion's thrall.

"The whole discourse that we did hold,
The long night all—
Was of thy virtues manifold,"
I'm passion's thrall.

The King his little page address'd,
The long night all—
" To come to me the cook request,"
I'm passion's thrall.

" Thou cook, the Greve to pieces chop,
The long night all—
And to thy Lady serve him up,"
I'm passion's thrall.

Long sat the Queen, the meat she eyed,
The long night all—
" This is no Roe I'm satisfied,
I'm passion's thrall.

" But 'tis the Greve our hall who grac'd."
The long night all—
The pieces she collects in haste,
I'm passion's thrall.

She wrapped them in white ermine skin,
The long night all—
A gilded chest she placed them in.
I'm passion's thrall.

She them collects, then wends her slow,
  The long night all—
Unto the fount of Maribo.
  I'm passion's thrall.

She dipped them in the water pure,
  The long night all—
"Rise, Christian man, I thee conjure!"
  I'm passion's thrall.

The man arose, and thanked his God,
  The long night all—
Then from the country forth he trod.
  I'm passion's thrall.

RAMUND

Ramund thought he should a better man be
If better apparel arrayed him ;
Of garments of leather, and hemp patch'd together,
The Queen then a present made him.
" These I will not wear," bold Ramund he said,
" They beseem me not fair," said Ramund the young.

" Your garments of tow and leather bestow
On the cleaners of trencher and platter."
The Lady to give him fresh clothes was not slow,
And of sammet and silk were the latter.

"Yes, these will I wear," bold Ramund he said,
"They beseem me right fair," said Ramund the young.

Ramund he into the shop now hies,
Where the best of all tailors was sitting:
"Now wilt thou, O tailor, so dext'rous and wise,
Make clothes for Ramund fitting?"
"And why should I not?" the tailor he said,
"Then thou'lt do well I wot," said Ramund the young.

Twice twenty-five ells for the breeches take,
Fifteen for the points of the breeches;
And them thou must strong and durable make
If thou therein settest stitches."
"These are too tight," bold Ramund he said,
"I can't stride out aright," said Ramund the young.

Now Ramund his ships beside the shore
With everything needful prepareth ;
And away, away, the salt ocean o'er
To the land of the Jutuns he beareth.
"We are come to this soil," bold Ramund he said,
"And withouten much toil," said Ramund the young.

Ramund he wanders along the strand,
There seven tall Giants faced him :
"If I take Ramund in my left hand
I afar from the land will cast him."
"You'll not do that alone," bold Ramund he said,
"Ye must come every one," said Ramund the young.

Ramund drew out his trusty glaive,
To which Dymling for name he had given ;
And dead to the earth with seven blows brave
He hewed the Jotuns seven.

"There ye all seven lie," bold Ramund he said,
"And still living am I," said Ramund the young.

Ramund walked on till the big Jutt he spied,
And to see him he sorely wonder'd ;
For full fifty ells was his carcase wide,
And his height was nearly a hundred.
"What a breadth, what a height!" bold Ramund he said,
"Dost wish for a fight?" said Ramund the young.

"Dear Ramund, if thou wilt let me live,
And to me no damage wilt proffer,
I'll bathe thee in wine, and to thee I will give
Seven bushels of gold from my coffer."
"Make 'em eight, if you will," bold Ramund he said,
"I will cut thee down still," said Ramund the young.

The first, first day that together they fought
With their naked fists they contested;
Then Ramund he hold of the Jutt's beard caught
And the flesh from the teeth he wrested.
"Thou grinnest full evil, bold Ramund," he said,
"Thou look'st worse than the Devil," said Ramund the young.

Next day they set to at the rise of the sun,
Again with a rage unexampled;
The huge stone mountain they stood upon
To the earth 'neath their feet was trampled.
"'Tis hard sport, I swear!" the giant he said,
"We began but this year," said Ramund the young.

Then Ramund again to his sword recurred,
To which Dymling for name he had given;
And the head of the Jutt, which no ox could have stirred,
He hewed high unto the heaven.

"'Twould not cut well I thought," bold Ramund
he said
"Yet it cut as it ought," said Ramund the
young.

Ramund he into the mountain strode,
Where the small trolds house were keeping;
The tears fast down their visages flow'd,
For Ramund they fell to weeping.
"Do ye weep for me," bold Ramund he said,
"I'll ne'er weep for ye," said Ramund the
young.

Now Ramund behold is dealing his blows
Like the Kemps most famed for fighting;
About and around in the cave he goes
To the earth the demons smiting.
"I rule here at my ease," bold Ramund he
said,
"And can do what I please," said Ramund
the young.

On his ship entered he so vehemently
That it cracked his vehemence under ;
In the ship the men all began loudly to bawl
And thought they should certainly founder.
"We shall not sink here," bold Ramund he said,
"So ye need not to fear," said Ramund the young.

Now Ramund he straight seven ships did freight
With the gold which the Trolds had hoarded ;
Then across the tide to the land he hied
O'er which the Emperor lorded.
"To this land we are come," bold Ramund he said,
"We no farther will roam," said Ramund the young.

On the white sand Ramund his anchor flung,
The high prow strandward turning ;
And the very first man to land that sprung
Was himself, with eagerness burning.

"Now do nothing more," bold Ramund he said,
"All labour give o'er," said Ramund the young.

To the Ball-house he sped, where the kempions play'd
At ball with glee and vigour;
But at his coming all stood adread,
At the sight of so fierce a figure.
"Pretty sport is this same," bold Ramund he said,
"I'll make one in the game," said Ramund the young.

With fear and dismay upon his brow
From a window the Emperor gazes:
"O who is that man in the yard below
That makes such horrible faces?"
"'Tis I, and with glee," bold Ramund he said,
"I'll do battle with thee," said Ramund the young.

Ramund he struck on his sword amain,
The earth to its centre trembled ;
The small birds swooned and fell on the plain,
On the bough that were singing assembled.
"Come down to me, knave," bold Ramund he said,
"Or by God I shall rave," said Ramund the young.

Ramund he into the door now trode,
His face like a burning ember :
"Though iron and steel oppose my road
I'll penetrate to his chamber."
"Now be on thy guard," bold Ramund he said,
"I'm about to strike hard," said Ramund the young.

On the door Ramund smote with an iron bar stout,
The castle was rent and parted;
'Neath that blow's power nod wall and tower,
From their place the windows started.

"You see I broke in," bold Ramund he said,
"Now at stake is thy skin," said Ramund the young.

"Dear Ramund, dear Ramund, my life now spare,
And with benefits thee I'll cover ;
I'll give thee my youngest daughter fair,
And the half of the land I rule over."
"Can take all any tide," bold Ramund he said,
"And thy daughter beside," said Ramund the young.

Ramund then drew out Dymling his blade,
Of his valour the trusty assistant ;
And he hewed at the Emperor so that his head
Flew fifteen furlongs distant.
"I thought 'twould not sever," bold Ramund he said,
"But the blood runs however," said Ramund the young.

ALF OF ODDERSKIER

Alf he dwells at Odderskier,
  Is rich and bold withal ;
Two stout and stalwart sons has he
  Whom men do kempions call.

Yes, two stout sons of mighty fame
  Has Alf of Odderskier ;
Of the king who dwells on Upsal fells
  They love the daughter fair.

It was youthful Helmer Kamp,
  From stall his courser led ;
" O I will hie me up the land
  And the king's fair daughter wed."

It was youthful Angelfyr
  He sprang on his courser's back :
"And I will ride to Upsal too,
  Though the earth beneath me crack.

"And when they entered the castle yard
  They doffed their cloaks of skin ;
Then straight they strode to the high, high
    hall,
  To the monarch of Upsal in.

In came youthful Helmer Kamp,
  With grace and beauty rife :
"O King, thy daughter dear I love,
  Wilt give her me for wife ?"

In came youthful Angelfyr,
  His steely helmet shone :
"O King, give up thy daughter to me,
  And straight from the land begone."

Then answered soon the Upsal-King,
  And a brave reply he gave :
"On my daughter I'll no husband force,
  She'll choose whom she will have."

"Now many thanks, dear father, that
  Thou leav'st the choice to me;
I'll plight me to young Helmer Kamp,
  He's like a man to see.

"But I'll not have young Angelfyr,
  He's an ugly Trold to view;
His father so is, his mother so is,
  So are all his kindred too."

Then answered the young Angelfyr,
  So sorely wroth he grew:
"Come, brother, come to the court-yard down,
  For her we will battle do."

Then up and spake the Upsal King,
  And the Upsal King did say:
'The swords are sharp, the swains are stark,
  There'll be, I trow, good play."

Alf he stands at Odderskier,
  And he listens the mountains tow'rds;
Then must he hear so far, far off
  The clash of his children's swords.

And that heard Alf of Odderskier,
  So far across the down :
" What have my sons now got in hand ?
  Why so wrathful are they grown ? "

He tarried then so short a space,
  He sprang on his courser red ;
And he arrived at Upsala
  Before his sons lay dead.

" Now tell me, youthful Helmer Kamp,
  Tell me my dearest son,
Wherefore so free from thy flesh and bone
  Those bloody rivers run ? "

Then answered the young Helmer Kamp,
  As he writhed him round with pain ;
This Angelfyr, my brother, has done
  Since the maid he could not gain.

I have full fifteen mortal wounds,
  They are blent with poison all ;
But if I had only one of them,
  I dead full soon must fall."

"Now list to me, young Angelfyr,
Beloved son of mine;
Say, wherefore trembles so the sword,
In that good hand of thine?"

"Ask'st thou why trembles so the sword
In this right hand of mine?
Because I've eighteen mortal wounds,
And to hurt me they combine.

"I have full eighteen mortal wounds,
And each so deadly sore;
If I had only one of them
I could not live an hour."

It was Alf of Odderskier,
An oak by the root uptore;
It was the young Helmer Kamp
Whom dead he laid in gore.

Now lie the valiant kempions two,
Within a single grave;
And the King to his daughter cannot give
The swain whom she will have.

Sore sorrows Alf of Odderskier,
  His valiant children slain.
Whilst Upsal's King may still at home
  His daughter fair retain.

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead. N.W.

Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

GRIMMER AND KAMPER

THE END OF SIVARD SNARENSWAYNE

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GRIMMER AND KAMPER

GRIMMER walks upon the floor,
  Well can Grimmer wield his sword:
"Give to me fair Ingeborg,
  For the sake of Christ our Lord."

"Far too little art thou, lad,
  Thou about thee canst not hack;
When thou comest 'mong other kemps,
  Ever do they drive thee back."

"Not so little, Sire, am I,
  I myself full well can guard;
When I fight with kempions I
  Gallantly can ply my sword."

"Kamper dwells in Birting's land,
For a stalwart kemp he's known;
Thou shalt wed my daughter, if
Thou to earth canst hew him down."

Rage and grief his bosom filled,
Grimmer through the door retires:
"What answer did my father give?"
Beauteous Ingeborg inquires.

"Kamper dwells in Birting's land,
And he bears a warlike name;
If I him to death can smite,
I may thee with honour claim."

Answered him the fair young maid:
"Ah! my father seeks thy death,
Kamper for thee is far too strong,
He will work thee rueful scathe.

"But I'll lend a helm to thee,
Thou may'st trust upon in fight;
And an acton I'll provide,
Whereupon no sword will bite.

"I'll give thee a faulchion good,
  And a harness on to put;
On earth's ground no sword is found
  Through that harness which can cut.

"I will give to thee a sword
  In thy youthful hand to bear;
Thou therewith mayst iron cleave,
  E'en as though it water were."

Kamper stands on Birtingsborough,
  Thence so far he sees and wide:
"What can be that little wreck
  Hitherward that seems to glide?"

It was little Grimmer bold
  Steered his vessel straight to land;
'Twas the bulky Kamper then
  Tow'rds him stretched a friendly hand.

"Welcome, little Grimmer, be!
  Here no harm thou hast to fear;
Half my land I'll give to thee,
  And my sister's daughter dear."

"Ne'er will I that Ingeborg,
My beloved, should hear such shame,
That I thy sister's daughter took,
And thy friend that I became.

"But we'll go to Vimming's hill,
And do battle, as is fit;
One of us his life shall lose,
Ere the ring of death we quit."

Thereto answered Kamper bold,
He had such an eager hand:
"I'll the first blow have, forsooth,
'Tis on my own earth we stand."

The first blow big Kamper struck,
Given 'twas with wrathful yell;
He so hard has Grimmer struck,
Down to earth young Grimmer fell.

Upstood little Grimmer then
Quickly little Grimmer rose:
"Thou shalt also stand me one,
Ere the sun sinks to repose."

The next blow was Grimmer's own,
  Fierce he hewed with his right hand ;
He hewed on Kamper's golden helm,
  To his heart down went the brand.

Kamper bellowed as he fell,
  Dead upon the earth so hard :
" Would to God that of my case
  Knew my brother Rodengard ! "

Joyous little Grimmer was,
  That the fight to end had come ;
Gold and silver much he took,
  To the maid he bore it home.

Blood forth streaming from his wound
  Lies the mighty Kamper dead ;
Grimmer lives, the brave young swain,
  Carries off his gold so red.

When he had the victory won,
  Little space he tarried there ;
Joyous sailed his men away,
  Joyous with their booty fair.

Standing on the battlement,
  Looks the Damsel towards the strand:
"Yonder I my youth espy,
  See his vessel touch the strand."

Thanks to brave young Grimmer be,
  For his faith he kept so well;
On next Monday morn, at dawn,
  Grimmer's bridal feast befell.

MIMMERING TAN

THE smallest man was Mimmering
E'er born in the land of Carl the King.

And ere he into the world was brought
His clothes already were for him
wrought.

Ere yet he could walk across the floor,
A ponderous iron cuirass he bore.

And ere he had learnt to ride, to ride,
His father's sword to his hip he tied.

The first time he his sword could bear
A better knight breathed not the air.

So down he went to the salt sea strand,
As the merchants lay before the land.

He saw then, under the steep hill's side,
A knight with sheeny armour ride.

Coursing came he at headlong speed,
Grim as a lion was his steed.

"Now, gallant Sir Knight, to me attend,
Wilt let me with thee as a shield boy wend?"

"Thou art too little and young, I fear,
My heavy harness thou canst not bear."

At that word Mimmering wrathful grew,
The Knight from his steed to earth he threw.

And much more harm to him was done,
He smote his head against a stone.

He clomb on the saddle and rode away,
He'll fain with other knights have a fray.

And when to the green wood he had won,
There met he Vidrik Verlandson.

"Well met, well met, thou stalwart knight,
Say, wilt thou for a fair maid fight?"

Then straightway Vidrik made reply:
"I'll meet thee, dwarf, or no man am I."

They fought for a day, they fought for twain,
Neither could from the other the victory gain.

So good stall-brothership vowed have they,
Which should endure to the judgment day.

How should it endure that long time all?
It could not last till evening-fall.

THE END OF SIVARD SNARENSWAYNE

YOUNG Sivard he his step-sire slew
  To avenge his mother's wrongs ;
And now to sport in the Monarch's court
  Young Sivard sorely longs.

It was Sivard Snarenswayne
  To his mother's presence strode :
" Say, shall I ride from hence ? " he cried,
  " Or wend on foot my road ? "

" O never shalt thou go on foot
  Whilst I've a horse in stall ;
I'll give thee the steed of matchless breed,
  Which courtiers Grayman call."

They led Grayman out of the stall,
  His reins were gilt about ;
His eyes were bright as the clear star-light,
  And fire from his bit sprang out.

Off Sivard throws his gloves, like snows
  The stripling's hands appeared ;
And with all his force he girded the horse,
  For to trust the groom he feared.

It was Sivard's mother dear,
  In a kirtle red was clad :
"The horse I fear will cost thee dear,
  And that fear makes me sad."

She followed him a long, long way,
  Her heart was filled with woe :
"O take good heed of the Grayman steed,
  He many a trick doth know!"

"Now list to me, my mother dear,
  Quick cast your care aside ;
To a son of worth thou hast given birth,
  Who his horse full well can ride"

Away they go, o'er bridges now,
  And now o'er brooks in flood ;
Clung so tight to his steed the knight
  That his boots were filled with blood.

The horse he hurried o'er the wold,
  Right past the crowded Ting ;
Then wildly gazed the folk, amazed
  That the horse he could so spring.

For fifteen nights and for fifteen days
  The speed of their race endured ;
Before them tall uprose a hall
  With the gates all fast secured.

The Dane King stood on the battlement,
  And thence looked far and wide :
"Some drunken peer is coming here,
  Who his horse full well can ride.

"O that is either a drunken peer,
  On courser good and keen ;
Or that, I swear, is my sister's heir,
  And in battle he has been."

The horse did spit from his mouth the bit,
  And, neighing, bounded high ;
Then maids and dames forsook their games
  And trembled fearfully.

Then maids and dames forsook their games,
  And shook their weeds below ;
To meet the boy, his sister's joy,
  The King of the Danes did go.

It was the mighty King of the Danes,
  And thus the King he cried :
" Ye archers, straight undo the gate,
  And fling it open wide."

It was Sivard Snarenswayne,
  Through the portal in rode he ;
Then dames fifteen of beauteous mien
  Before him bent their knee.

The Dane King to his merry men spake :
  " I rede ye treat him fair ;
I tell to ye for a verity
  No jesting he will bear."

It was Sivard Snarenswayne,
  He made his courser bound
Ten ells and more the ramparts o'er,
  And thus his death he found.

From his gilded selle down Sivard fell,
  Snapped Grayman's back outright ;
Wept great and small in the Monarch's hall
  For the wizard steed and knight.

SIR GUNCELIN'S WEDDING

It was the Count Sir Guncelin,
  Who to his mother cried:
"O I in quest of knightly fame
  Through foreign lands will ride."

"And if thou from the land wilt ride,
  To help thee on thy way,
I give thee the steed, the wondrous steed,
  The good steed Carl the grey.

"I'll give the steed for thy time of need,
  The good grey Carl, but know
No spur of steel must grace thy heel,
  Nor helm be on thy brow.

"Never a warrior must thou heed,
  But straight thy path pursue,
Till thou in fight engage the knight
  Whose name is Ivor Blue."

It was the Count Sir Guncelin,
  By the green hill took his way;
There chanced he to meet little Tilventin,
  And bade him promptly stay.

"Now welcome little Tilventin,
  And where hast thou passed the night?
"I have passed the night at Brattingsborg,
  Where from helms the fire they smite!"

It was the Count Sir Guncelin,
  From under his red helm glared:
"Sir Tilventin it had better been
  If that thou hadst never declared."

It was the Count Sir Guncelin,
  His sharp sword out he drew;
It was little Tilventin,
  Whom he did to pieces hew.

He rode away unto Brattingsborg,
  On the door he struck with his spear:
"Doth any warrior bide therein,
  Who will come and fight me here?"

It was the Knight Sir Ivor Blue,
  He turned to the West his eye:
"Now help me Wolf and Asmer hawk,
  I hear a kemp's fierce cry."

It was the Knight Sir Ivor Blue,
  He turned to the East his eye:
"Now help me, Odin, for thou hast might,
  I hear Sir Guncelin's cry!"

It was the Count Sir Guncelin,
  His helm o'er his white neck flung;
That sound in the ear of his mother dear
  Through the dark night-time rung.

The Dame awoke at black midnight,
  And unto her Lord she cried:
"Now deign, now deign, thou highest God,
  With my son in this fray to bide!"

The first course that together they rode,
So strong were the knightly twain,
Struck Guncelin Sir Ivor Blue,
And stretched him on the plain.

"Now listen, Count Sir Guncelin,
If thou'lt but let me live,
My young and newly wedded bride,
I unto thee will give."

"I will not take thy wedded bride
Upon marriage stands my mind;
Give me Salentia, sister thine,
And my fate to her's I'll bind."

They rode away to the bridal feast,
Withouten more ado;
Of stalwart knights, and warrior wights,
They invited the best they knew.

They invited Vidrik Verlandson,
And Diderik, knight of Bern;
They invited Olger the Daneman too,
Who in battle is so stern.

They invited Silvard Snarenswayne,
  Who before the bride should ride ;
And thither came also Langben the Jutt,
  To sit at the Bridegroom's side.

They invited Master Hildebrand,
  The bridal torch he carried ;
And he was followed by Kempions twelve,
  Deep drank they whilst they tarried,

And thither came Folker Spilleman,
  With his humour the kemps must bear ;
And thither came King Sigfrid Hoon,
  To his own pain and care.

Then came the proud Dame Grimhild,
  To prepare the bride for the hall ;
With iron she caused her feet to be shod,
  And her fingers with steel tipped all.

And thither came Dame Gunda Hetta,
  'Mid the Norland hills her house ;
And there doth she pass a right merry life,
  With dance and with carouse.

Thither came likewise Dame Brynhild,
  She cut for the bride the meat,
Her followed slender ladies seven,
  'Midst the knights they took their seat.

They follow'd the bride to the chamber in.
  Of a luncheon slight to taste ;
And there she eat four tuns of pottage,
  Which pleased her palate best.

Then before her sixteen oxen-bodies,
  And eighteen swine disappear ;
And before her thirst she could assuage,
  She drank seven tuns of beer.

So mighty the press of their garments was,
  As they led the bride to the hall,
That they brushed down, ere they ushered
    her in,
  Full fifteen ells from the wall.

They led the bride to the bride-bench up,
  And sat themselves down so light,
That a bench of stone which they sat upon,
  Sank into the ground outright.

They placed before her the very best food,
  Nor did she the food decline ;
Fifteen oxen the sea-wife ate,
  And also ten fat swine.

The bridegroom's eyes were upon her fixed.
  And at length surprised he grew :
" Ne'er have I seen a youthful bride,
  To the dish such justice do."

Up then sprang the Kempions all,
  And to one another did say :
" Now, whether shall we cast the bar,
  Or fight in knightly way ? "

The warriors began to describe the round,
  Upon the verdant earth ;
For the honour and pride of the young sea-bride,
  Who should look on their deeds of worth.

The young bride up from the bride-bench sprang,
  Two hands so weak had she ;
Towards her Langben the Giant leapt,
  Fine sport began to be.

Then danced the table, then danced the bench,
  And the sparks from the helms flew high ;
Out ran the valiant warriors all :
  " Dame Devil thou mak'st us fly ! "

Then there arose a mightier dance,
  From Ribe unto the Slee ;
The shortest warrior dancing had
  Fifteen ells beneath the knee.

The shortest warrior in that dance,
  Was little Mimmering Tan ;
He was among that heathenish throng
  The only Christian man.

EPIGRAMS

Honesty

No wonder honesty's a lasting article,
Seeing that people seldom use a particle.

A Politician

He served his God in such a fashion
As ne'er put Satan in a passion.

The Candle

For foolish pastimes oft, full oft, they thee ignite,
I oft a pastime prove for tongues with folly rife;
By wasting of thyself thou yieldest others light,
And I in self same way must use my luckless life.

EPIGRAM ON HIMSELF

By Wessel

He ate, and drank, and slip-shod went,
Was ever grieving and misgiving;
For nothing fit, nor competent,
At last not even fit for living.

London:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.

Edition limited to Thirty Copies.

PROUD SIGNILD

AND

OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

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PROUD SIGNILD.

Proud Signild's bold brothers have taken her hand,
They've wedded her into a far distant land.

They've wedded her far from her own native land,
To her father's foul murderer gave they her hand.

And so for eight winters the matter it stood,
Their face for eight winters she never once view'd.

Proud Signild she brews, and the ruddy wine blends;
To her brothers so courteous a bidding she sends.

Sir Loumor then laughed to his heart's very core—
Not once had he laughed for eight winters before.

To the top of the castle proud Signild she goes,
And thence she so many a wistful look throws.

And now she perceives down the green hillock's side
Her seven bold brothers so furiously ride.

Proud Signild she stands on the castle's high peak,
She hears in the courtyard her seven brothers speak.

Proud Signild she hastes her array to put on,
And unto the hall to Sir Loumor she's gone.

"Now hear thou, Sir Loumor, thou lord, great and fine,
"Wilt welcome these seven bold brothers of mine?"

"I'll welcome these seven bold brothers of thine,
Proud Signild, as if they were brothers of mine."

Sir Loumor again a wild laughter outsent,
And the hard marble wall by that laughter was
rent.

Then outspake the child in the cradle that lay,
No word had the child ever spoke till that day:

"It shows that no good is about to take place,
When my father he laughs in my dear mother's
face."

With his foot he the cradle has spurned with
such force
That out rolled the baby, a blood-besprent
corse.

So matters passed on 'till of evening the fall,
To the evening repast the relations went all.

Sir Loumor her lord she placed at the board's
head,
To the stools at the bottom her brothers she led.

To Sir Loumor she handed the stout ruddy
wine,
To her brothers she only sweet milk will assign.

Sir Loumor pretended to drink deep and fast,
But in secret the wine down beneath him he
cast.

Proud Signild now to the bed chamber wends,
And the bed she prepares for her dear-beloved
friends.

The bed she outspreads on the hard rugged
stone,
And that to prevent them from sleeping was
done.

And under their sides she placed slily their
knives,
Which well they might trust in defence of their
lives.

She also has placed underneath their bed heads
Their actons of steel, and their keen naked
blades.

'Twas late, late at night, and the lights were
burnt low,
And away to their couches it lists them to go.

No sooner proud Signild had sunk to repose,
Than from her white side dread Sir Loumor
arose.

To the hall, the dark hall, took Sir Loumor his
way,
Proud Signild's seven brothers intending to slay.

To the side of the bed upon tip toe he drew,
And the seven bold brothers he traitorously
slew.

In his fell hand uptakes he both faulchion and
knife,
And each of the sleepers deprived he of life.

In a bowl he collects of the murdered the gore,
And that he brings in the proud Signild before.

In, in at the door-way Sir Loumor he sped,
From Signild's cheek faded the beautiful red.

"Sir Loumor, my lord, thy looks fill me with fright,
Say where hast thou been in the midst of the night?"

"I've been to the hall, if the truth I must tell,
I heard my two hunting hawks screech there, and yell."

"O why of thy hawks art thou talking, my lord?
May God in his mercy my dears brothers guard."

Sir Loumor produced of her brothers the gore,
And that by her foot he has placed on the floor.

"Now drink thou, proud Signild, my much beloved Dame,
This blood from the veins of thy brothers that came."

"With a terrible thirst I must needs be distrest,
When I, O Sir Loumor, obey thy behest.

"But to bed and to sleep, my dear lord, now repair,
Full little, be sure for my brothers I care.

"I care not although all my kindred are slain,
Since thee, my heart's dearest, alive I retain."

So things in this fashion for eight winters stood,
And Sir Loumor his brothers and sisters ne'er view'd.

Sir Loumor he brews, and the ruddy wine blends,
To his brothers and sisters a bidding he sends.

Then laughed the proud Signild, that dame fair of face,
And the first time it was for full eight winters space.

Sir Loumor's relations she placed at the board,
And she handed them mead with so many a fair word.

Of the wine, the clear wine, drank Sir Loumor so free,
For his life not the slightest precaution took he.

On the soft down she spread their beds high
from the ground,
She wished to procure for them slumbers so
sound.

She spread out their beds on the bolsters of
blue,
Thereon with her fingers the sleep runes she
drew.

No sooner Sir Loumor had sunk to repose,
Than from his embrace the proud Signild
arose.

From out of a corner she took a keen sword,
She'll awake with its point the dear kin of
her lord.

To the sleeping apartment proud Signild then
sped.
And straightway his five belov'd brothers slew
dead.

Though her heart it was sad, and the tears
in her eyes,
His three belov'd sisters she slew in like guise.

Then swift in a bowl she collects the red gore,
And that she brought in good Sir Loumor before.

She took off the chaplet her brow from around,
And firmly the hands of Sir Loumor she bound.

"Now wake thou, Sir Loumor, and speak to thy wife,
I'll not, whilst thou sleepest, deprive thee of life.

"Now drink, O Sir Loumor, the kind and the good,
Drink, drink thy dear brothers' and sisters' heart's blood."

"O sore would the thirst be, O Signild, full sore,
That ever could tempt me to drink of that gore.

"Thyself to thy bed, my sweet Signild, betake,
For the death of my kindred my heart will not break."

Sir Loumor sought after his trusty brown brand,
And found to his fear he was bound foot and hand.

"O Signild, proud Signild, I pray thee now spare,
And aye to be kind to thee, Signild, I swear."

"Methinks that thou didst little kindness display,
The time thou my father didst murderously slay!

"Thou slewest my father with treacherous glaive,
And then my dear brothers, so beauteous and brave.

"Then hope not for mercy, on vengeance I'm bent,
Because all I cherished from me thou hast rent."

Then she drew forth the knife from her sleeve bloody red,
And Sir Loumor she stabbed till the life from him fled.

Then out from its cradle the little child spake:
"That deed, if I live, I will some day ywrake."

"I know that thou art of the very same blood,
And I never expect thou to me wilt be good."

The child by the small of the leg she has ta'en,
And against the bed side she has beat out its brain.

"Now I, the proud Signild, have slain man for man,
And I'll hie me away to my land and my clan."

THE DAMSEL OF THE WOOD

The Knight takes hawk, and the man takes hound,
And away to the good green-wood they rambled ;
There beasts both great and small they found,
Amid the forest glades that gambol'd.

A hind 'neath a linden tree he spied,
A maid beneath the willows sitting ;
The Knight outspread his mantle wide,
Within that spot for love so fitting.

And there throughout the night they lie,
And no one sought their rest to trouble ;
The linden tree so charmingly
Conceals them with its foliage noble.

No sooner dawned the morning light,
  And early cocks commenced their crowing,
The Damsel pats on his breast the knight:
  "Sweet love, you must be up and going.

"Ride o'er the brig at full career,
  And o'er the verdant meadows hurry;
My brothers seven you'll meet I fear,
  So full of courage, strength, and fury."

"If seven or ten thy brothers be,
  Each full of courage, strength, and beauty,
If a comrade good they seek in me
  I trust I know a comrade's duty.

"And if me they'll have as a brother dear,
  Their brother straight to be I'm willing;
But they shall win the victory ne'er
  If bent my youthful blood on spilling."

"O dearest heart, with tears I pray
  That thou wilt not go lightly nigh them,
But ride about another way,
  Far distant off thou may'st descry them."

"O ne'er at court shall it be said
  That I, a knight, for warriors seven,
Or ten times seven, the straight road fled,
  To match them all I trust in heaven."

His sword to his side the warrior tied,
  And then himself in his acton casing,
A fond adieu to the Damsel cried,
  Who sadly stood behind him gazing.

The youth despising all alarms
  With spur so keen his courser urges,
Seven knights he meets in burnished arms
  From out the wood as he emerges.

"Ha, early met, thou warrior good,
  Pray tell us what thou hast been doing!"
"O I have been to the good green-wood,
  With hound and hawk the deer pursuing."

"Where is thy hawk and greyhound, say?
  Thy silvan spoil, we pray thee show it."
"A good friend came across my way,
  And on that friend I did bestow it."

"No knight will part with his prey so light
For which in wood he's toiled and panted;
With a maiden bright you slept last night,
Her brothers' leave nor sought nor granted."

"To chase the dun deer, Sirs, I rode,
Full little of your sister knowing,
The first fair deer itself that showed
I chased with heart and bosom glowing.

"It crouched beneath my scarlet cloak,
It pleased me, Sirs, beyond all measure;
With thanks to heaven the gift I took,
And made me happy with my treasure.

"I let my hounds the wild deer chase,
I thought but little of their capture;
But I took the hind to my embrace,
What moments then of bliss and rapture.

"Of all the world's fair maids was she
The fairest both in face and carriage;
If she, Sir Knights, your sister be,
I beg your sister's hand in marriage.

"A faithful brother I will be,
  And in your cause I death will suffer;
And her I'll hold in respect and love,
  And nothing more a knight can proffer."

"Thou shalt not get the maid for mate,
  But thou shalt die, thou knight enamour'd;
So make thy shrift 'neath the linden straight,
  The little birds shall hear it stammer'd.

"Now wilt thou stand, or wilt thou fly
  Into the deep wood for protection;
Or guard thy young life valiantly,
  To prove thy courage and affection?"

"O I will stand, nor craven fly
  Unto the murky wood for cover,
I'll guard my life right valiantly,
  And thus I'll prove me worthy of her."

First one he slew, then quickly two,
  His knightly courage well display'd he;
But, though his seven foes he slew,
  With his own life full dearly paid he.

When the tidings reached the maiden's ear
  She let fall briny tears in plenty ;
But if for her kin she shed one tear,
  She shed I ween for the bold knight twenty.

DAMSEL METTIE.

Knights Peter and Olaf they sat o'er the board,
Betwixt them in jesting passed many a word.

"Now hear thou, Sir Olaf my comrade, do tell
Why thou hast ne'er wedded some fair demoiselle?"

"What need with a housewife myself to distress,
So long as my little gold horn I possess?

"So long as my little gold horn I possess,
I lure every maid I may wish to caress.

"The Damsel is not in the world to be found,
But what I can lure with that little horn's sound."

"I know a proud damsel that dwells by the rill,
On her thou couldst never accomplish thy will.

"I'll gage my war courser, the steady and tried,
Thou never canst lure the fair Mettie, my bride."

"Against him I'll gage my grey courser of power,
That she shall this evening repair to my bower.

"My courser so proud, and my neck bone so white
I'll gage that I lure the fair Mettie this night."

'Twas late in the evening, mist fell from the skies,
Sir Olaf he plays in his very best guise.

Sir Olaf he plays on his gold harp a strain,
That heard the proud Mettie far over the plain.

Sir Olaf a tune on his golden horn blew,
To the house of fair Mettie the thrilling sounds flew.

Long stood the fair Mettie and listened thereto:
"Now shall I or not to that horn-player go?"

Long stood damsel Mettie in doubt and in care:
"No one of my maidens take with me I dare."

The maid and the little brown messan her friend,
Through the paths of the forest so lonely they
wend.

Her mantle of blue the fair Mettie puts on,
And unto the bower of Sir Olaf she's gone.

On the door of the chamber she gave a low
knock:
"Sir Olaf, I pray thee, arise and unlock."

"O none have I summoned to me at this hour,
And unto no one will I open my door."

"Sir Olaf, arise, let me in I request,
At what I have heard I'm so sorely distrest."

"At what thou hast heard, be thou glad or
distrest,
Thou comest not into my bower of rest.

"But soon should the door to thee open I wot,
Provided Sir Peter thy sweetheart were not.

"Although in my heart I may love thee full
dear,
Sir Peter for me to admit thee's too near."

"Sir Olaf, arise, let me in I implore,
The night-dew falls chilly my scarlet dress o'er."

"Though chill fall the night-dew thy scarlet dress o'er,
I dare not, O Mettie, fling open my door."

"Since into thy bower thou lett'st me not come,
O let thy swains guide me, dear heart, to my home."

"The night it is bright, and the moon sheds her ray,
Fair maid, thou wilt find without trouble thy way.

"The moon's in the sky, and shines clear o'er the mead,
So back by thyself to thy chamber proceed."

The maid, and the little brown messan her friend,
They home through the forest so lonely must wend.

And when to the gate of the castle she came,
Sir Peter was leaning against it his frame.

"Thrice welcome, thrice welcome, thou proud Mettelil,
Say where hast thou been in the night season still?"

"I walked out, my lord, by no mortal eye seen,
And I gathered the herbs both the blue and the green.

"The herbs I collected with diligent hand,
Which just at this season in fullest bloom stand.

"I stood in the meadows throughout the long night,
And harked to the nightingale's song with delight."

"No! not to the song from the nightingale's throat,
But unto Sir Olaf his gilded horn's note.

"This night's walk, and others of similar sort,
Will make thee the subject of common report.

"The walk of this night, and perhaps many more,
By the Saints, my fair Mettie, this walking give o'er.

"Now hear thou proud Mettie, to bed hie away,
And 'neath the white linen thy fair body lay.

"Depart to thy bed, that I rede thee to do,
Would'st have me remain to thee tender and true.

"I've lost now my courser, the steady and tried,
Because thou hast proved thee a false, fickle bride."

And what became of her no man ever knew,
Nor whither her ashes before the wind flew.

But as soon as her bower in ruddy flame
blazed
In the breast of Sir Peter such anguish was
raised.

Sir Peter he grieved to his very death day,
Sir Olaf ne'er ventured to cross his friend's
way.

I counsel each swain, in affectionate part,
To tempt not too hardly the maid of his
heart.

LONDON:
Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.

Edition limited to Thirty Copies.